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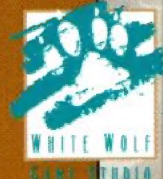
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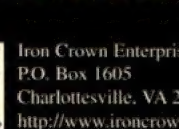
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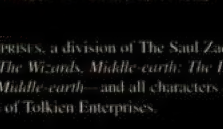


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# REALMS OF FANTASY



COVER: Warrior of Light, by Tim Hildebrandt. Brothers Tim and Greg Hildebrandt are well-known in the fantasy field for their paintings, many of which were executed jointly. ABOVE: Multi-media artist Barclay Shaw, combines a fantasy image with the realistic rendering techniques of the computer in *Gone to Glory*. See our Gallery section beginning on page 58 for more of Shaw's fantastic art.

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By Julie Stevens

Another tale of the magical, mystical isles of Hawaii from the author of "Pacifica." When a young chief is murdered, his gentle and lovely widow must put her destiny into enchanting hands.



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# Blindfolded, With a Thumbtack

**T**HIS MONTH, READERS, YOU get a special treat — what follows is part of an article I wrote recently for an upcoming Writer's Digest reference book, *The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writer's Sourcebook*. That I am able to bring you this excerpt so early is due to some whining on my part and a great deal of graciousness on the part of the editor at Writer's Digest Book.

Given that this is a sourcebook for serious writers of SF and fantasy, I might as well be honest. I don't, regardless of how much better your story was than the one I ran, pick the fiction I run at random from the slushpile. Every story submitted is given its fair chance at publication, though, I must admit, some have a better stab

The winnowing process begins, oddly enough, at the post office. When I come, as I do twice a week, to collect the mail from the box, what I really don't want to do is stand on a half-hour long line to collect a postage-due ms. So I don't do it. If your ms comes to me postage-due, it goes back to you, unopened, the same way. When you consider that I get some 100-130 manuscripts per week, you have to realize that the postage-due rates can add up pretty darn fast. Now the other thing you have to consider is the number I just gave you — yes, you read it correctly: I do get 100-130 manuscripts per week. Keep that number in mind when I mention that I publish only six issues per year, each of which contains six or seven stories. Now do the math: At most, I can publish 42 stories per year. If they're all really, really short, then maybe we can push that number up to a nice round fifty. I have submitted to me for publication, on the low end of the estimate, 5,200 stories per year. So, your odds on getting published are slightly more than 10 to one against. And that's assuming that the playing field is entirely even — that no stories from Really Famous Writers have jumped in there to take up space that should rightfully go to your story.

So, OK, you groan, how do I get you to pick my story out of the teeming multitudes? Well, the first thing you do is: Don't give me an excuse to reject you. That's all I'm looking for, you know. I've got manuscripts up to my hips in my office and enough stories already in inventory to publish another four complete issues. So, to be brutally frank, I'm just looking for a reason to send yours back to you. Don't give me one right off, and you're ahead

of the game by a long shot. What do I consider a good reason for rejection? Well, right off the bat, if your manuscript is not typed, it goes right back, unread. If it is typed, but it's not double-spaced, it goes right back unread. If it's typed and double-spaced but the point size is smaller than 10 (well, let's say eight for a really clear serif type), it goes right back.

Those are the easiest excuses you can give an editor. They're also the easiest to avoid. All you really need to do is put yourself in my shoes for an instant (size nine, Joan and David when affordable). Not only do I have all these manuscripts to read for the magazine, but I also have a full-time job as a literary agent which also involves reading manuscripts. Not to put too fine a point on it, when my eyes are open, they are reading. I'm not going to make life harder on them by asking them to read illegible scripts. Not to mention the fact that even if the finest short story ever written on this green Earth came to me single-spaced or hand-written and say, for the sake of argument, that I was in a really generous mood that day and read it anyway, and said to myself, "This is the finest story ever written on this green Earth," my next thought would have to be, "Too bad it can't be published if it's not typed." No typesetter will set type from a single-spaced or hand-written manuscript. They just won't do it — at least not for what magazines pay them. In any case, those are by far the easiest rejection excuses to avoid. Get past that barrier, and you will get at least the first couple of lines of your story read. Congratulations! You've made the first cut.

Wait a second, you say. What do you mean, the first couple of lines? This is the first cut? Well, yes, I'm sad to say it is, and any editor who tells you that he or she reads every word of every story submitted is telling you an untruth. We editors even have a catch-phrase for it: "You don't need to eat the whole fish to tell if it's bad." This comes under the writing-school subhead of The Hook. You've gotta get us with the first line, give us a sentence that forces us to read the next one, and so on and so on and so on till, gosh, we've read the whole thing. At this point you're two-thirds of the way to a sale. Because even if we've eaten the whole fish and it wasn't bad, that doesn't mean it was actually good. Now we have to decide if we like the way it was prepared — did it enlighten us, amuse us, surprise us, engage us, show us something new? If it did, then congratulations again! You've beaten the odds ♠

Shawna McCarthy

# REALMS OF FANTASY

VOLUME 2

NUMBER 6

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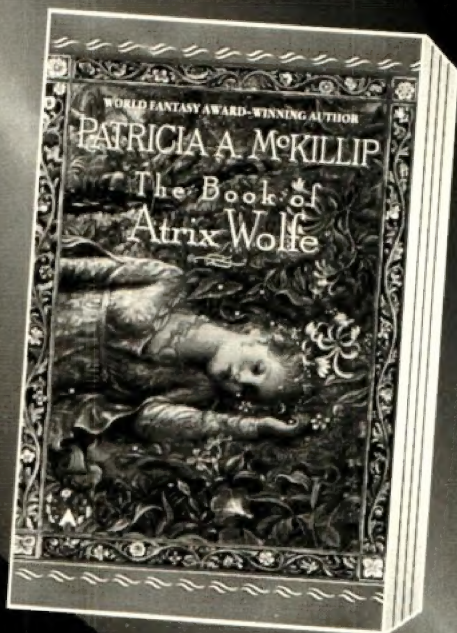


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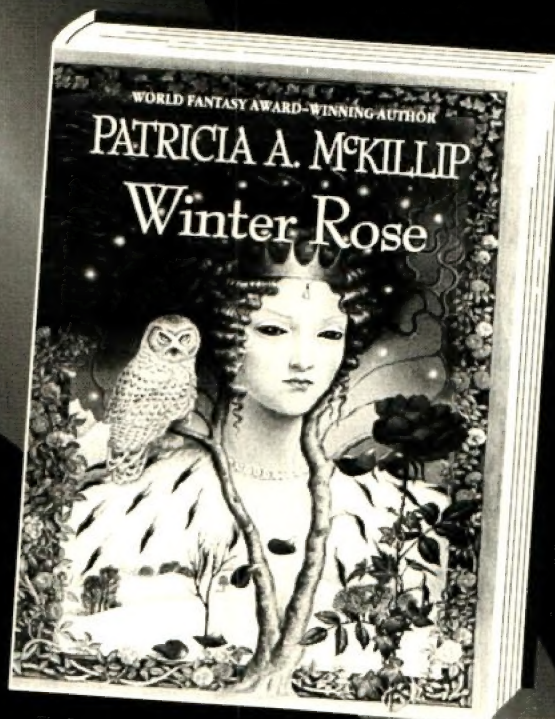
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Dear Ms McCarthy,

I love you dearly and think RoF is the best written and handsomest magazine I have seen in many a long day, but I was aghast at your response to John Rodenbiker in the current issue (especially in the context of his letter and yours). Shawna — may I call you Shawna for just this one teeny weeny criticism? Well, not so teeny at that. The point is, I am SURE you are currently not a junior in high school, and so was taken aback when you said in your response to John, "As a high school junior, I am well aware that ..."

I assume you are being deluged with letters like this, so do forgive me, but it also gives me a chance to say how much I admire the magazine, and I agree wholeheartedly with your editorial: I like the variety and am happy to see all you have to offer.

By the way, in hobnobbing with the writers on Genie have you come across my daughter, Anne Stuart, a very good writer of romantic suspense and historicals? I'd like to get her to do some fantasy sometime. She's a very good writer and a funny one when she chooses. Good luck and thanks for a magazine that brings satisfaction and joy.

Virginia Stuart

*Aghast, were you? Gee, that seems a bit strong ... Surprised, maybe, or startled, but aghast? Well, it was kind of a dumb error, but if you look closely at the magazine, you'll, alas, find all sorts of typos, misplaced modifiers, and other annoying grammatical and mechanical glitches. It comes, I think, from people like me, waiting till the last minute to get their stuff in ...*

Dear Shawna:

Back in my Chicago days, I once overheard a bit of street drama. A young man was yelling at a young woman: "You're giving it to everyone else — why not to me?"

My thought at the time was that it was a perfect example of lousy salesmanship. He wasn't going to get what is best given out of love by demanding it as some sort of right and insulting her as promiscuous in the bargain. But more than that, it was a cry of despair and frustration from the heart. He was past even hoping for achieving his goal, he was no longer trying to win her over. He had failed without understanding why, and all he could do was express his baffled rage.

I don't want to carry the sexual metaphor too far into the publishing business, but some of that same frustration seemed to show up in David Flanagin's letter. His story was rejected when seemingly less worthy stories get published, he doesn't know why, and his only recourse to save face is write a witheringly scornful letter basically saying his story was too good for the common rabble anyway. And just to

make sure, he pounds the last nail in the coffin by insulting the editor. That isn't the way to make a sale, Dave.

For that matter, the letter oozed with a poisonous contempt for the fantasy genre as a whole. If he dislikes the conventions and traditions of fantasy so much, why even try to write in the form? To show the rest of us who do like it what boobs we are compared to a man of his learning and cultivated taste?

One writer who got away with that attitude was H. P. Lovecraft, but he pulled it off because he could write, believed in what he wrote, and — well, loved his craft. All I see in Mr. Flanagin is somebody tossing off a story written in contempt and in the apparent belief fantasy readers are so stupid they'll eat up any old thing, and then being surprised and outraged when it bounces back without a check attached. Nope, some things are best done out of love.

I've written and submitted things to publishers over the years, and many have come back with form rejections. There are markets I've never cracked after twenty years of trying and I still don't know why. So I know what Flanagin feels. The pain is real. But self-defensive raging is self-defeating. All you can do is send the piece on to another editor, and every once in a while, something wonderful happens. But you don't win the heart of a fair maid by calling her a whore, and you don't sell a story to an editor by telling her it's too good for her and her magazine. (Unless, of course, it's pretty darned good, but why make it harder for yourself than you have to?)

Dwight R. Decker

*Dwight, you've got it precisely, and I'm pleased that I don't have to write such a cogent and thoughtful follow-up myself.*

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

Just wanted to let you know what a terrific magazine you produce in ROF. When I first received the invitation to subscribe starting with the opening issue, I was thrilled. I have not been disappointed. By the way, I like the letter from David Flanagin with your response, especially your response! This was in the June 1996 issue.

I do have a question. The dust cover on my June issues says "This is Your Last Issue," but my mailing label says Aug 1998. Why does the dust cover say it's my last issue? Thanks for your help.

Laura Klaine  
Independence, KY

*Well, there in a nutshell, are the two issues that consumed letter writers this month. For more on Mr. Flanagin, see below. As far as the mailing covers go, that, unfortunately, was a mistake on*

*the part of the mailing house. Certainly, for some of you, it was your last issue. But for the vast majority of those who received it, don't worry — it wasn't your last issue — it was just a mistake.*

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

Are you a descendant of Nostradamus? That would be my guess, anyway. On page 4 (the table of contents) of your June 1996 issue, in the description to the short story "Vanishing Act" by Kelly Link, you wrote "If you don't watch closely, the things you love can vanish right before your eyes." And sure enough, it came true!

I say this because pages 32 - 33, and 50 - 51 pulled a "vanishing act" from my issue. They're not there. I imagine it happened to many other people as well, so I was wondering how such a thing could have happened, human error aside (because we know all editors and printing companies are perfect). I figure you must have wanted to throw this excitement at us so we could cherish our next "complete" issue even more!

I was going to whine loudly about the missing pages so I thought it best to sit down and calculate exactly what I got out of *Realms of Fantasy*, compared to the subscription cost, to see exactly what sort of a refund (it is tax time, after all) I should be expecting. Unfortunately for me, according to my calculations, I get much more out of *Realms* than I pay for, therefore it looks as though everyone who has a June 1996 issue with missing pages actually owes you money for the mix-up. Oof!

Anyway, I figure 80 million people have already informed you of the missing pages, but in case not I thought I'd send this along. You're doing a great job with the mag and it's good to see such a beautiful product in my mailbox now and again.

Sincerely,  
J. Barr

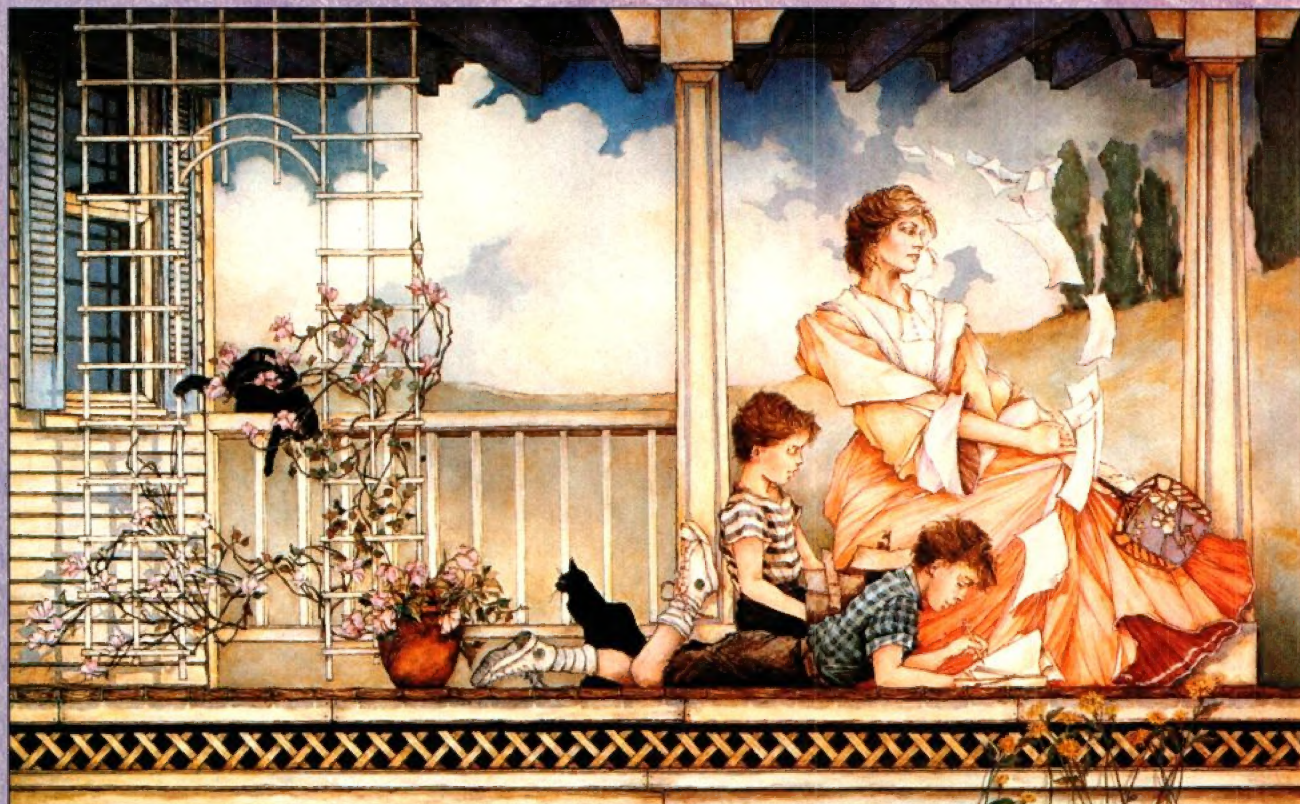
*Actually, you're the only person to mention such a thing. I'm truly sorry it happened, and I'm sure that the good folks at Sovereign Media will send you a replacement issue forthwith. We won't even wait for your check with our refund to arrive!*

*Everyone else was up in arms about "this is your last issue" mistakenly placed on the cover wrapper by our printers. We use cover wrappers to protect your magazines from damage in the mail, or in your mail box, or in your briefcase as you carry it to read on the train. This time the wrong wrapper was used on quite a few! Many apologies for the worry this caused so many of you.*

Your letters and comments are welcome. Make sure you mark them as letters or they're likely to get mixed in with writers' guidelines requests. Send them to: Letters to the Editor, *Realms of Fantasy*, P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. Or better yet, E-mail: s.mccarthy@genie.geis.com. ☛



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UNTIL NOW PHILIP PULLMAN HAS SPECIALIZED, VERY SUCCESSFULLY, IN WHAT ARE called Young Adult Books. *The Golden Compass* (Knopf, NY; 399 pp; hardcover; \$20.00) represents his first emergence into what I suppose might be called Grownup Adult Books, although it would probably be wise of the book chain stores not to mention it since it would inevitably lead to a sudden range of other, equally silly, classifications (and whole banks of newly labeled shelves for already overworked clerks to sort and stock) such as Middle-aged Adult Books, Adults of a Certain Age Books, and Old Adult Books.

I might as well start off by admitting that I enjoyed *Compass* so much that I tracked down some of Pullman's Young Adult ones, specifically the prize-winning, highly praised Sally Lockhart trilogy, a group of thrillers set in the Victorian Era which star a steadily maturing and feisty young woman who, while bravely and effectively battling a series of extremely colorful villains, also challenges the repressive keep-down-the-female attitudes which were such an outstanding feature of that era.

I found that while these books are indeed aimed at young adults, they are done so entirely without condescension, and they struck *this* far from *young* adult as being very pleasantly entertaining. What they put me in mind of more than anything else were much more literate versions of the outrageous adventure novels of the dark criminal doings of Fantomas, the French master villain who started operations back at the turn of the century and thrived on into the roaring twenties. Not in the fantasy genre, but enjoyably diverting and, if you do have a young adult female about the house, full of excellent and encouraging messages about standing up for

oneself as a woman in what is still decidedly a world essentially run by and for males.

*Compass* is Book One of a trilogy to come with the overall title of *His Dark Materials*. It is very much the same sort of theological/Jungian legend which C.S. Lewis loved to spin and uses many of the same techniques and materials as were employed by that master of fantasy.

Certainly the scope of it is vast and Lewisian since the action of its first book takes place in an alternative universe, the second promises to occur within our own, and the third pledges to somehow resolve the two. On this enormous stage, Pullman has committed himself to depict an epic and multilayered struggle of good and evil which apparently will wrestle with the same potentially archetypal contest taken on by Lewis in his *Silent Planet* trilogy — nothing less than the Edenic contest and its reformation.

Like the Sally Lockhart stories, *Compass* features an extremely gutsy and resourceful young female, one Lyra Belacqua. Lyra has been brought up by scholars in an eccentric, but affectionate fashion, which has allowed her to develop into a somewhat wild child who has been exposed to many more levels of society than most children in her rather heavily stratified world are privileged to encounter. She is well-acquainted with Water Gypsies, treated with grudging respect by the toughest children of the surrounding town's worst slums and dockyards, and has made friends just about everyone in the college at Oxford where, for reasons mysterious to us at the beginning, she has been raised since a babe.

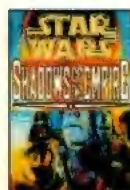
Like everything else in Pullman's alternative world, his Oxford is, in many ways, very much like our own and, in many other ways, very different. The great and overriding difference between the universe presented in this book and the one in which you'll read it is that every human being is born with, and is accompanied through life by, a daemon familiar. When they and their humans are young, these familiars are highly flexible physically and can and do change their shape according to whim or need, being a panther prowling about the room one moment and a mouse cuddling comfortably in a friendly jacket pocket the next, but as they and their humans grow older these familiars tend to favor a shape that — sometimes flatteringly and sometimes not — somehow reflects the true being of their human (walk warily about

Lyra and her daemon travel toward icy polar regions to uncover a sinister plot. What is the secret of the armored polar bear? Art by Eric E. Rohmann.

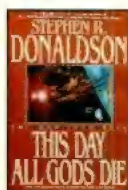




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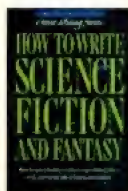
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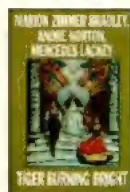
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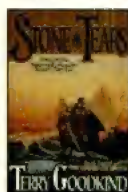
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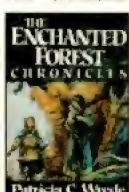
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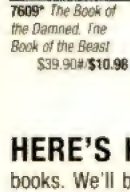
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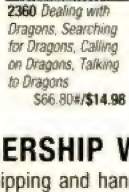
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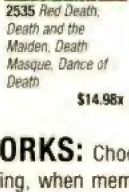
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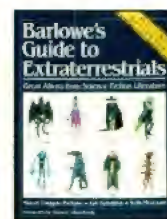
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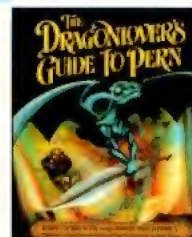
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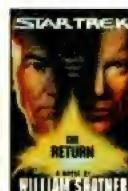
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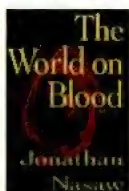
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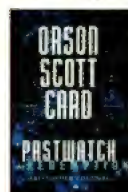
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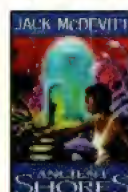
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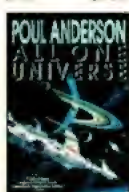
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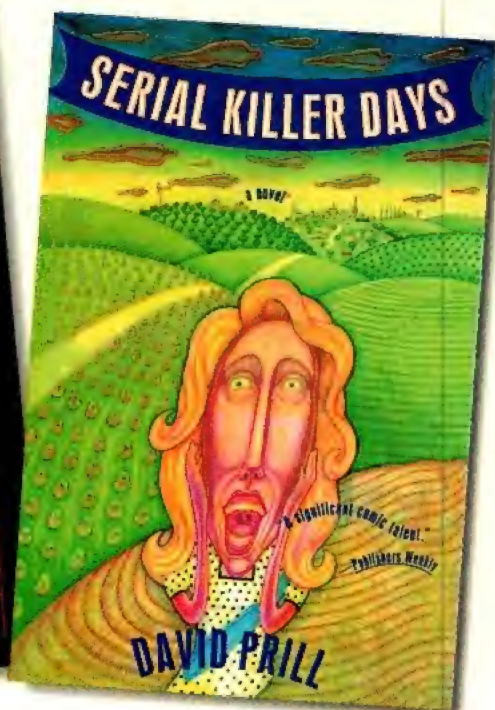
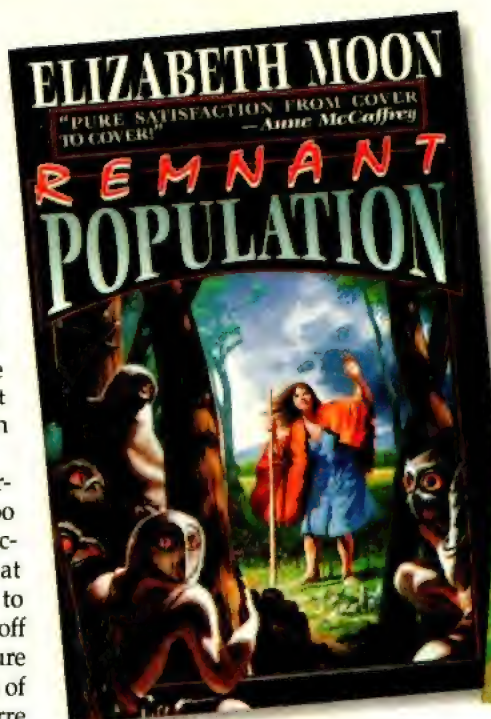


the adult who has a python daemon, for instance) and finally to take it on permanently. Humans and their daemons are always close together, unlike witches (the witches in the book are a delight, by the way) and their daemons, who can travel long distances apart if need be. When a human sickens, so does his or her daemon, and when the human dies the daemon dissipates and is no more. This basic condition of humans and their daemons being profoundly needful of one another provides the most important plot element in the story, or at least so it does in Book One.

Lyra's casual and innocent lifestyle is permanently disrupted when she snoops too deeply into the lives of her scholar protectors and uncovers a sinister plot that instantly involves her in another plot to counter the first one. This plot starts her off on a constantly expanding adventure wherein she travels to far lands in all sorts of outrageous ways in a multitude of bizarre vehicles, each one of them taking her further northward toward and into increasingly icy polar regions, every place stranger than the one before. In these exotic climes she encounters and makes friends with a dazzling array of characters, human and otherwise, all of whom or which are so many leveled and full of surprises that I am confident that by the end of Book One we still have only the slightest notion — and that one probably

highly misleading — as to who or what they will eventually turn out to be. Is the armored polar bear the loyal beast we think we've come to know? What will turn out to be the final truth as to Lyra's parentage (a subject I have left strictly alone so as not to spoil the many startling discoveries already revealed)? What will the ingenious balloonist-adventurer from Texas come up with

next, and is the Texas he comes from our Texas or another? And will the old gypsy and his beloved witch — still as young and beautiful as he remembers her from his long-ago youth since witches age so much more slowly — somehow find happiness? And what is the truth about the mysterious dust falling from the aurora borealis? We'll have to wait until Book Two for further informa-



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tion. And then we'll have to wait for Book Three. And I suspect they'll both be worth the waiting.

**Remnant Population**, by Elizabeth Moon, (Baen Books, NY; 342 pp; hardcover; \$22.00)

Elizabeth Moon is really and truly a born tale spinner. One of those authors who easily and effortlessly involves you deeply into her story before you've even really settled into your chair. Like Mr. Pullman, her heroes tend to be feisty women who may now and then be daunted by what appear to be totally overwhelming odds, but who eventually see the way to neatly move around them or, if need be, to carve their way right through them. I cannot but assume that you, being a reader of this magazine, are familiar with her work, certainly with her Paksenarrion trilogy. If by some unfortunate fluke this is not the case, I strongly suggest that you correct the situation, and an excellent start could be made by reading *Remnant Population*.

The book is, like all good legends, simple in the telling, but deep in its implications. It concerns the later life and times of a doughty Ofelia, a woman who has gone through the youth and middle age of a hard, but reasonably rewarding life with considerable style and steadily increasing wisdom.

As the story starts we learn from the outer edges that the Sims Bancorp — the sort of institution I am sure the reader is more familiar with than he or she would really like to be if he or she has had to deal with so much as a regular checking account — has decided for a bunch of stupid, bureaucratic reasons that it would please their stock holders if they not only downsized but eliminated entirely the terraforming of a planet which is failing for another bunch of stupid, bureaucratic reasons.

Unfortunately for Ofelia, she is living in a colony which has been established on the planet being terraformed. She has started a garden there, which is doing well, and she is reasonably happy in spite of the condescensions and mild bullyings of her loutish son and his rather boring wife, even in spite of the tricky climate and occasional flooding, both of which are due to stupid bureaucrats deciding to place the colony in an obviously troublesome location. She is decidedly displeased when it eventually leaks down to her level that Sims Bancorp is about to pull the plug.

The other colonists are also displeased and immediately start to hold protest meetings under the mistaken impression that Sims Bancorp gives half a damn what they think. Ofelia has been through a few of these events, and her skepticism as to the likely effectiveness of the colonists' protests rapidly grows as orders from on high accumulate. Her skepticism is confirmed entirely when mercenaries arrive to "help" the colonists avoid wavering in preparations for departure.

Slowly, very much to her surprise, it dawns on her that she might not go, that she might

# Poetry Contest \$24,000 in Prizes

*The National Library of Poetry to award 250 total prizes to amateur poets in coming months*

**Owings Mills, Maryland** — The National Library of Poetry has just announced that \$24,000 in prizes will be awarded over the next 12 months in the North American Open Amateur Poetry Contest. The contest is open to everyone and entry is free.

"We're especially looking for poems from new or unpublished poets," indicated Howard Ely, spokesperson for The National Library of Poetry. "We have a ten year history of awarding large prizes to talented poets who have never before won any type of writing competition."

## How To Enter

Anyone may enter the competition simply by sending in **ONLY ONE** original poem, any subject, any style to:

**The National Library of Poetry  
11419 Cronridge Drive  
PO Box 704-1755  
Owings Mills, MD 21117**

The poem should be no more than 20 lines, and the poet's name and address must appear on the top of the page. "Each poem received will be acknowledged, usually within seven weeks," indicated Mr. Ely. Every poet who enters will receive an evaluation of their artistry.



*The Coming of Dawn, featured above, is one of The National Library of Poetry's recent deluxe hardbound anthologies.*

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Having awarded over \$90,000 in prizes to over 5,000 poets worldwide in recent years, The National Library of Poetry, founded in 1982 to promote the artistic accomplishments of contemporary poets, is the largest organization of its kind in the world. Anthologies published by the organization have featured poems by more than 100,000 poets. "Our anthologies routinely sell out because they are truly enjoyable reading, and they are also a sought-after sourcebook for poetic talent," said Mr. Ely.

"We're always looking for new poetic talent," he added. "I hope you urge your readers to enter the contest. There is absolutely no obligation whatsoever, and they could be our next big winner."

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simply stay on behind. At first this truly radical idea terrifies her, but then, as she turns the notion over more and more in her mind, she finds herself getting used to it. Eventually, much to her surprise, she finds herself actually plotting how to actually bring such a thing about.

Moon does a lovely job of showing Ofelia's false starts and falterings; her bursts of courage, her attacks of hopelessness. There is a fine sense of her physical presence and much about how her old body, including its emotional equipment, handles the almost ridiculous challenges she's handing it by taking on this bodacious plan. Time and again it seems she's biting off far too much; sometimes she blunders; willy-nilly luck goes against her, then with her.

She pulls it off and survives the results of her success, including many sorts of personal transformations, mostly unexpected, as Moon puts together a fine feminine version of Robinson Caruso, which is a real pleasure and which would have made a fine book by itself, but, it turns out, all of this is only prologue. Ofelia is not alone on her planet, after all.

I ordinarily avoid giving so much plot in these reviews, and will henceforth revert to the usual policy of hintings. The creatures Moon has Ofelia encounter by slow degrees are highly satisfactory and have a quiet convincingness and depth which allows her to continue unfolding them in charming and surprising fashions throughout the rest of the book. Their increasing encounters, the events in their slow and difficult acquaintance, are scary, awing, touching, and highly amusing by turns. Ofelia is far from done with growing and discovering, and the creatures, interacting with her, do considerable growing and discovering of their own.

Nor are the plot twists anywhere near an end with this phase of the tale. Moon continues to elaborate and expand the satiric and compassionate points it makes with the same easy skill she brings to all her art. Really a good book.

*Serial Killer Days*, by David Prill (St. Martin's Press, NY; 218 pp; hardbound; \$20.95)

David Prill has come out with another Midwestern *Candide*. In his previous and first novel, *The Unnatural*, events concerned the slow rise of a talented lad determined to become a living legend in the funeral game, which, in that book, was essentially equated with baseball — scouting and team spirit, heavy-handed management, and all. In this one, the central character is pretty and blond and named Debbie Sue Morning, and her dream is considerably less grand than Prill's previous hero as she merely wants to be the town's Scream Queen come Serial Killer Day.

Standard Springs was inspired to hold its annual celebration of Serial Killer Day because every summer, reliably for years, the town found itself waking on the same exact date to discover that at least one more of its



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niche that suits your individual goals and interests. It might be mystery, religion, romance, adventure, family, or any other niche—or you may decide to stay with the basic fiction/nonfiction program.

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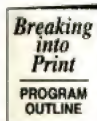
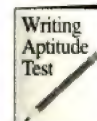
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citizens had been slaughtered horribly by what is assumed to be the same unknown fiend. At first this regular phenomenon produced nothing but horror, however, increasing familiarity eased the impact of the repeated shocks and, inevitably, the notion of commercial applications began to occur to the town fathers.

At first it was a smallish event, but it proved to be such a strong, successful tourist draw from the start that it rapidly expanded into a major celebration participated in enthusiastically by all the towns' citizens and included, among a vast multitude of other entertainments and events, a carnival, a major parade with floats, and, of course, the Scream Queen festival which Debbie, so often a runner-up, burns to win.

The tragic problem is that Debbie is an almost hopelessly cheerful soul who simply cannot help looking at the bright side of any situation no matter how grim it might happen to be. Of course it's obvious an outlook of this sort is a terrible trait for a hopeful Scream Queen since truly spine-chilling, blood-curdling howls and yowls best emerge from a mouth and respiratory system contorted and twisted by despair, morbid brooding, and — above all — the attitude of, and a true belief in, fear.

Debbie tries every way she can to overcome her unfortunate psychological state — for example by encouraging her discouraged scream coach by telling her a harmless little lie about being frightened by a dream about bugs — but nothing really seems to work. The one bright spot seems to be her notion of strengthening her chances during the talent competition phase of the Scream Queen contest by reading a work of the "heralded hog farmer and decadent impressionist poet from Paristown, Minnesota," Ole Rimbaud, probably best known for his morbid volume of verse: *A Season in Heck*.

*Serial Killer Days* operates on a slightly smaller scale than Prill's first book, but it is every bit as wacky as its predecessor and continues to indicate he is carving out a nice little macabre niche all his own. One aspect of his talent, which is given even freer rein than before, is his knack of coming up with truly surreal monikers, and I cannot resist a short listing of some of the best. Debbie's father's first name is Arvid, their neighbors are the Gears, a victim of an apple stealer is a Mrs. Flatwire, and among the town's leading officials are a Judge Flail and a Sheriff Eeha. Who can resist a book containing names like that? Not I.

Gahan Wilson

**Black Horses for the King**, by Anne McCaffrey (Harcourt Brace, San Diego, 240 pp., hardcover, \$16.00)

If you love horses, as many fantasy readers do, you've probably experienced a common frustration. While many fantasies include horses, many also are filled with inaccuracies regarding the care, training, and

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abilities of horses. For a horse lover, this can destroy the plausibility of an otherwise enjoyable and believable fantasy tale. Well, horse lovers, rejoice, for Anne McCaffrey has written a book just for you.

*Black Horses for the King*, set in fifth century England, is the story of Galwyn, a young boy who comes into the service of Lord Artos (later known as King Arthur).

Lord Artos has a plan to develop the first British cavalry, to help him defeat the Saxons. To do this he must acquire and breed Libyan horses, the only ones large enough to carry his armed warriors. This means traveling to Europe to buy the horses, and then transporting them by ship back to England. Once in England, the horses must be ridden overland to Lord Artos's farm (and later to Camelot).

Riding horses used to rocky, sandy surfaces over damp, marshy ground, Lord Artos's group of companions soon finds the horses have a predilection for hoof problems that leave them lame. This presents a major problem, since an effective cavalry must be able to move swiftly. Galwyn comes under the tutelage of Canyd Bawn, whose job is to keep the horses healthy. Canyd's idea to protect the horses' hooves by giving them leather (and later iron) sandals to wear is met with skepticism by most. But as he and Galwyn refine and perfect the process of creating the sandals and fitting and nailing them to the horses' hooves, the benefits of the process become clear. Galwyn becomes an expert at the shoeing of horses and follows Lord Artos's cavalry into battle with the Saxons to repair the sandals and care for the horses.

While this book is being published under Harcourt Brace's Children's Books imprint, the language is fairly advanced, and the story

is one which will easily interest adult readers, especially those interested in horses, history, or Arthurian lore. Galwyn is an engaging character, who grows in strength and confidence and triumphs over his own personal enemies. Lord Artos is everything we would want him to be, and seeing him through Galwyn's eyes reveals the fascination and loyalty inspired by this charismatic leader.

For those of you wondering where Merlin fits into all of this, he doesn't. McCaffrey's book, though it deals with King Arthur, is not a fantasy. It is historical, and is based upon the accounts of those reputed to have lived when Artos did.

It provides a fascinating look into that time, and into the challenges those people faced.

***Touch Wood*, edited by Peter Crowther (Warner Aspect, New York, 384 pp., paperback, \$5.99)**

When I first saw this book, I was not excited about it. Since anthologies contain work by many different authors, we usually judge them (in the bookstore, when we're trying to figure out which book to buy) by their topic or "hook." You might have an anthology of stories about vampires, sex, and death, serial killers, Elvis, or whatever. Fresh anthology topics are hard to come up with, and this one did not seem terribly fresh or exciting. *Touch Wood* is a collection of stories about superstitions. The idea seemed rather quaint and very un-scary to me.

So I was quite pleasantly surprised when I began reading *Touch Wood* and found it contained some very original and startlingly scary stories. Rather than considering this an anthology about superstitions, simply con

*Continued on page 74*

## BOOKS TO LOOK FOR

**Arcady**, by Michael Williams, Roc/Dutton-Signet. Already being hailed as a classic in the genre, this ground-breaking novel from TSR best-seller Williams explores "realms of fantasy" never before seen in this sometimes overworked field. Grand, sweeping plots, high adventure, glorious language — Arcady is one of a kind.

**The Deepest Sea**, by Charles Barnitz, Roc/Dutton/Signet. Vikings, dragons, magic and the Grateful Dead, all wrapped up in one of the most dryly humorous narratives this field has seen in years. A promising debut.

**Last Sword of Power**, by David Gemmell, Del Ray. Bestselling author Gemmell continues his Stones of Power series with this pre-Arthurian fantasy.

**Sacred Prey**, by Vivian Schilling, St. Martin's Paperbacks. When a loanshark kills an errant debtor, he is forced by an

unknown power to inhabit the body of his victim — three days before the murder. Part fantasy, part horror, part suspense, the novel has been compared to the works of Dean Koontz.

**Resume with Monsters**, by William Browning Spencer, White Wolf. Are Lovcraftian monsters stalking hapless employee Philip Kenan from bad job to bad job? Or, like most nightmares, are they all in his head? A truly funny and touching novel with more than a little truth in it.

**Ill Met in Lankhmar**, by Fritz Leiber, White Wolf. Two of the greatest heroes in fantasy, Fafhrd and The Gray Mouser, the ones who, as they say, started it all, are back in print in this omnibus collection of their first two adventures. If you're new to the field, drop everything you're currently reading and go get this book. This one'll show you how it oughta be done.

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BY DAN PEREZ

## The Frighteners is Peter Jackson's return to dark comedy and horror.

**N**EW ZEALAND WRITER/DIRECTOR PETER JACKSON'S MOVIES HAVE A DELICIOUS SENSE of unpredictability to them. In his 1994 sleeper *Heavenly Creatures* (recently noted in these pages as one of the best fantasy films you never saw), two repressed, over-imaginative girls are suddenly transported to a fantasy world populated by animated clay golems. And in his outrageous 1992 gore comedy *Dead Alive*, a film that *Science Fiction Age* editor Scott Edelman refers to as the "Ten Commandments of gore movies," a harried young man keeping a family of ravenous zombies at bay in his basement takes time out to walk the baby in the park like any good adoptive father. That it's a zombie baby makes some difference, of course.

Now Jackson is making a return to darkly comedic horror with *The Frighteners*, which he co-wrote with long-time collaborator Frances Walsh, and on which Robert Zemeckis (*Forrest Gump*) served as executive producer. In the film, Michael J. Fox plays Frank Bannister, a ghost-buster who comes to the aid of a small California town plagued by nasty ghosts. What the townspeople don't know is that Bannister is a scam artist in league with the troublesome spirits.

"Well, Fran and I have written just about everything I've done," Jackson says of his collaboration with Walsh, "We collaborated on *Dead Alive* and *Heavenly Creatures* and *Meet the Feebles*. And really, *The Frighteners* had its genesis as a possible spec script idea, because one of the things we always wanted to do, just for fun, sitting there in New Zealand, was write a spec script that we could

sell, rather than me make it. So we were thinking of some ideas and we came up with the basic idea for *The Frighteners* about two or three years ago. We actually dreamed the idea up soon after *Dead Alive* or *Brain Dead* (the New Zealand title) was made. We wrote up a two-page outline with the intention that one day we'd write a script. In the meantime we sent this two-page outline to our agent in L.A. and, eventually, after a few months we went off and were sort of writing *Heavenly Creatures*, working on that script. After a few months we got a call saying that our outline had found its way into Bob Zemeckis' hands.

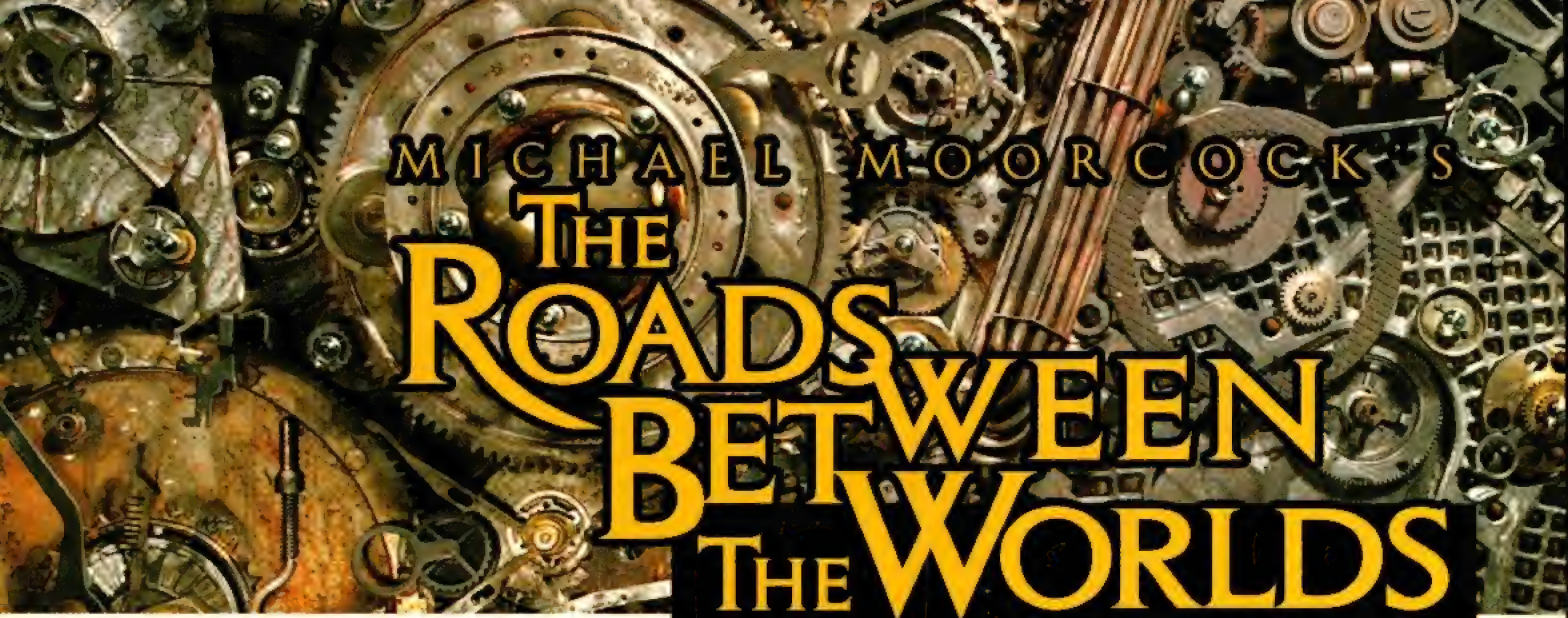
"At that time, Bob was looking around for ideas for a possible *Tales From the Crypt* film, and our agent thought this little two-page thing sort of vaguely fit into that *Tales of the Crypt* format, and sent it to Bob and he liked it. He met us on a trip that we made to promote *Brain Dead*. We dropped into L.A. and had lunch with him. He really wanted us to write the script, and we were about to go into preproduction on *Heavenly Creatures*, so we said 'Sure, we'd love to do the script for you, but we're going to have to make this other film first.' He was going off to make *Forrest Gump*, so we were sort of both busy — this was 1993 — and we were both busy for most of that year.

"So, about a year later, we finally gave him the script. Some time in that year we had managed to make *Heavenly Creatures*, and while we were cutting *Heavenly Creatures* we actually wrote *The Frighteners*. And it was only at that point, really, when we gave him the script, that he asked me if I was interested in doing the movie. We were sort of writing it with the thought that he might direct it, or that he might set it up as a *Tales From the Crypt* film, but it was never actually being written with the idea that I was going to make the film. It was kind of strange. But obviously if you're working on a script, you sort of tend to fall in love with what you're doing; I really enjoyed it. So I was quite pleased when he asked me if I wanted to make it and I said sure, that'd be great."

Jackson describes *The Frighteners* as Casper meets *Silence of the Lambs* in this paranormal thriller. Michael J. Fox stars as ghost-buster/scam artist Frank Bannister.







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The film was shot, like all of Jackson's films, in his native New Zealand, which had to double for Northern California. "Even though it was written in New Zealand, we wrote it as a film that was set in small-town America because that's where we thought the market for the film was. And when Bob asked me to make it — I don't have a huge ambition to leave New Zealand and come over to the States and work — I said to him, 'Well, look, I'm sure we could make bits of New Zealand look like small-town U.S.A.'"

Press notes describe *The Frighteners* as a horror comedy. Is it Jackson's favorite genre to work in? "I like horror and fantasy," he says. "I'm not a huge science fiction fan. I don't take things too seriously — I find it hard to take most things seriously, and that includes the films that I make. You know, even though I might set out to be serious, I usually drift into comedy, because I find it more interesting than being totally straight-faced about things. I always find it more interesting to sort of ferret around and find the humor in situations and actors. Even in *Heavenly Creatures*, which we did as a relatively straight historical thing, what I enjoyed most was giving this reasonably grim movie a sort of comedic vein."

"*The Frighteners* is more intense than what you'd expect from a comedy. I wouldn't describe it as a comedy — I'd describe it as a paranormal thriller with a comedic kind of vein to it. A bit like *Heavenly Creatures*; if you



There is a record-breaking number of computer-generated special effects from WETA, LTD.

describe *Heavenly Creatures* as a murder movie in which two girls kill their mother, but with a comedic vein, then *Frighteners* is kind of similar, there. It's horror, it's a thriller, it's all those things. It does get reasonably intense toward the end: There's not a lot of comedy toward the end."

Jackson is unconcerned with possible comparisons between *The Frighteners* and movies like *Ghostbusters* and *Beetlejuice*. "*The Frighteners* is very different from that type of

movie. They are much more comedic: more wacky than *The Frighteners*. Every movie is different and we certainly didn't set out to copy anything, and so I'm very comfortable with the fact that *The Frighteners* has an individuality. People coming out of *The Frighteners* are definitely not going to be thinking of *Beetlejuice* or *Ghostbusters*.

"In this sort of Hollywood-talk that people love to do — when people ask me about it, I like saying that *The Frighteners* is sort of



# Thomas Canty

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*Casper meets Silence of the Lambs."*

Jackson's film features a record-breaking number of computer-generated special effects: more than 500 shots done by the New Zealand effects firm WETA, LTD. "This is just a company I started up to do the effects for *Heavenly Creatures* because we had about



*Most of the ghosts are played by actors.*

thirty CG shots in *Heavenly Creatures*. And for *The Frighteners*, we just expanded it and got more and more workstations and really got a lot of CG computer operators from around the world to come to New Zealand; a lot of people from the States. We've got about fifty people working there now, finishing up the film." When asked if the firm supplies effects work for other films, Jackson replies, "We haven't yet. We've just been so busy on *The Frighteners* for the past eighteen months. Because it's a company that I'm closely involved in, it doesn't appeal to me to do effects for other people's films. I mean, we might do it if we have to, but hopefully we can go on from *The Frighteners* and do some R&D and do something else."

The massive number of effects sequences proved to be daunting, Jackson admits. "The most difficult aspect of it all was the technonightmare part of it. The ghosts in the movie are played by actors for the most part — there's a CG character, but most of them are played by actors. But I wanted them to look like ghosts; I didn't want to do the sort of cheap thing where all the ghosts are solid and only some people in the room can actually see them. I wanted them to look like ghosts: I wanted them to be transparent and glow and become washed-out and white. So to do that, we had to shoot all the scenes with ghosts — of which there are 500 shots — we had to shoot those scenes twice, because a lot of the story involves Michael just interacting with these guys as if they're just normal characters in the film. He can see them, and he walks around the room and talks to them. Yet they're transparent.

"So the way we had to shoot that was to shoot Michael by himself on the set, just walking around and talking to nothing. Later — sometimes months later — we'd shoot the ghosts against bluescreen, having the other half of the conversation, and sometimes these were quite long conversations. I wanted to keep the camera moving all the

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time: I didn't want to get into a situation of doing lock-off shots, so we had motion-control going the whole time. These things would just take hours to set up. We shot for nearly seven months. Universal green-lit 125 days of shooting, which they told me was the longest shooting schedule they'd ever green-lit in the studio's history. I think *Waterworld* shot longer, but it wasn't planned that way."

*The Frighteners* features a number of cast members with previous genre movie credits: Fox, John Astin (TV's *The Addams Family*), Dee Wallace Stone (*E.T.: The Extraterrestrial*, *The Howling*), Jeffrey Combs (*Re-Animator*, *From Beyond*). Regarding Fox's character, Jackson says, "We wrote the script and really didn't have an actor in mind. We just wrote the character as we wanted him in the story. When we came to actually think of who was going to play this person, we realized that we'd written quite a difficult role because it demanded a strong sense of drama. Someone who could do all the dramatic stuff but also someone who had very good comic timing and the ability to pull off some of the comic moments."

"There are not that many actors around who can actually do that. There are a lot of actors who are weighted toward comedy or toward drama, but not a bit of both, and Michael is someone who is good at both. So we thought about that and mentioned him to Bob and Bob said 'Well, sure, if you want Michael, I can certainly give him a call and ask him to read the script.' Michael read the script and he came to Toronto at the same time that I was over there with *Heavenly Creatures*, and had a look at the film, and he agreed to do it."

Jackson is a self-confessed fan of the films of Jeffrey Combs (who plays a whacked-out FBI agent) and Dee Wallace Stone (who plays a psychologically scarred woman). Jackson says of the actors, "It was a real joy to be able to work with these people. They're such such wonderful actors. Hopefully, in *The Frighteners*, we've given people like Jeff and Dee a really strong role; they've got quite key roles in the movie. They're not by any means small cameos. They're both so wonderful in the film: they create very, very interesting characters."

Perhaps not surprisingly, Jackson was born on October 31, 1961. "It was sort of weird," he says, "because in New Zealand, we don't really do the Halloween thing like you do in the States. We're more English-bound and we know about Halloween day, but we have never celebrated it like people do in the United States. So I always grew up having my birthday on Halloween, but not having all the fun that's associated with it."

Jackson is committed to making more genre films in the future. "I just love fantasy. I love making movies where you can just escape from the real world for two hours. You sit in there and you experience something that you could never possibly get from real life. So I'm always going to gravitate toward that kind of film."



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## Breadcrumbs, beasts and transformations: Fairy tales are plentiful in poetry.

**W**HY DO I READ YOU TALES/IN WHICH BIRDS SPEAK THE TRUTH/AND PITY CURES THE blind,/and beauty reaches deep/to prove a royal mind?/Death is a small mistake/there, where the kiss revives;/Jenny we make just dreams/out of our unjust lives ....

These evocative lines come from Lisel Mueller's "Reading the Brother's Grimm to Jenny" (which can be found in Mueller's wonderful collection *The Private Life*). Mueller — along with many other 20th century English language writers from both sides of the Atlantic — writes works that often fall within the genre of modern magical poetry:

poems that draw upon ancient myths and stories to comment upon contemporary life. Why would modern poets work with tales generally deemed to be old-fashioned and meant for children? "... because," Mueller writes (in "Why We Tell Stories") "we had survived/sisters and brothers, daughters and sons/we discovered bones that rose/from the dark earth and sang/as white birds in the trees/Because the story of our life/becomes our life/Because each of us tells the same story/but tells it differently/and none of us tells it/the same way twice ..."

As we have explored in previous Folkroots columns, the fairy tales we know best today are rooted in the oral folk tradition and come down to us through European works published in the 16th and 17th centuries. These rich, complex, and sensual tales were created for adult audiences in forms rather different from the watered-down children's versions we're familiar with today. Writ-

ers in centuries past have better understood the enduring power of magical tales, using their archetypal themes to create potent new works of art — such as the fantastical plays of William Shakespeare, the epic poetry of Edmund Spenser, and the magical works of Goethe, Schiller and other German Romantics.

In the late 19th century there was a strong revival of interest in folklore in England. At the very same time that Victorian publishers were bastardizing literary French and Italian tales into stories suitable for "proper" Victorian children (which is, unfortunately, the form in which they are still most often published today), a number of poets were exploring those themes in verse intended for adult readers. Keats created his seductive, immortal "Belle Dame Sans Merci": *I met a lady in the meads/Full beautiful — a faery's child,/Her hair was long, her foot was light,/And her eyes were wild.* Alfred, Lord Tennyson worked with the mythic

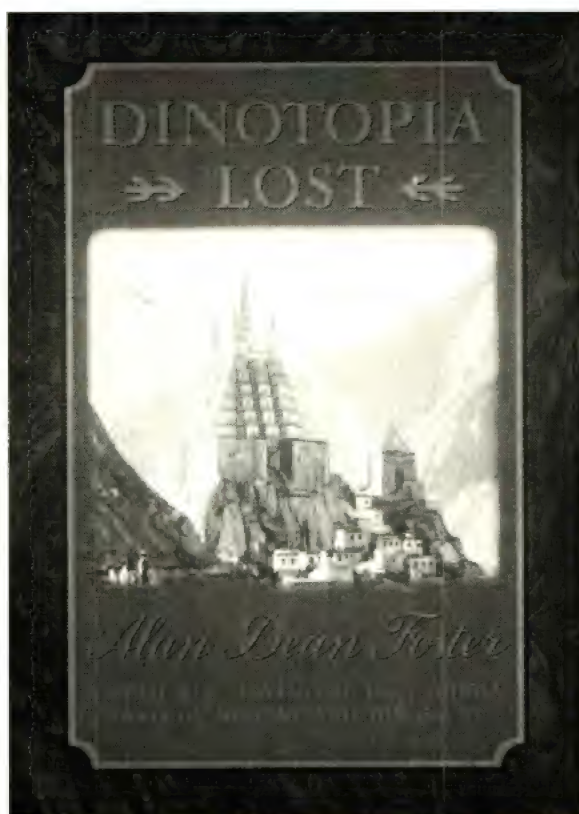
Arthurian cycle in epic poems like "The Lady of Shalott," the story of a cursed young woman and her fatal love for Sir Lancelot: *She left the web, she left the loom,/She made three paces thro' the room, ... /Out flew the web and floated wide;/The mirror crack'd from side to side;/The curse has come upon me!' cried/The Lady of Shalott.*

These poems fired the imaginations of a young group of English painters known as the Pre-Raphaelites. One of them, William Morris, went on to write his own popular epic Arthurian poems, while others associated with the group, such as Christina Rossetti and William Allingham, wrote verse rooted in English and Celtic fairy lore. The peerless Irish writer William Butler Yeats is the best known and most prolific of the turn-of-the-century "fairy poets," with

John William Waterhouse's famous Pre-Raphaelite painting *The Lady of Shalott* (1888) hangs in the Tate Museum in London. It illustrates the Victorian poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson.







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haunting work like "The Hosting of the Sidhe," "Golden Apples of the Sun," and "The Stolen Child." (We'll explore the Pre-Raphaelites, Oscar Wilde, Yeats, and others in an upcoming Folkroots column on Victorian fantasy.)

The magical stories of myth and legend are potent tools in an artist's hands, providing metaphorical symbols with which to address the most basic and unchanging issues of human experience: love and hate, fear and courage, greed and generosity of spirit, inspiration and despair. The modern writer working with these stories is rather like a jazz musician improvising on a classic tune: The work gains power when one is familiar with the theme on which it is based.

In our day, when the literary mainstream is still rather leery of magical works, the writers most skilled in using the tools of myth, legend, vision, and dream can be found gathered together in the genre "ghetto" of fantasy fiction, or spread more loosely across the landscape of contemporary poetry.

Unlike readers of magical fiction, lovers of magical poetry have no single section of the bookstore in which they can easily find such works. Magical poems must be sought out one by one in the pages of mainstream poetry volumes; these poems have not been separated from the rest of literature as magical prose has been. I know of only one good survey collection of contemporary magical

poetry: *Disenchantments*, an anthology of modern fairy tale poetry edited by Wolfgang Mieder. (If there are others, I'd love to hear about them c/o this magazine.) Mieder, a professor of folklore at the University of Vermont, has done an excellent job collecting 101 poems by a broad spectrum of fine contemporary poets and creating an attractive trade paperback volume published by the University Press of New England (1985). I highly recommend this collection to those interested in magical poetry. In addition, I'd like to point the way to several authors whose work is also well worth seeking out.

Anne Sexton surely tops the list of modern poets working with magical themes. In 1971, she published *Transformations*, an extraordinary book of 17 poems based on classic tales like *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rapunzel*, *Iron Hans*, and *The White Snake*, etc. *Inside many of us*, Sexton writes in "Rumpelstiltskin," is a small old man/who wants to get out. No bigger than a two-year-old/whom you'd call lamb chop/yet this one is old and malformed/... He is a monster of despair./He is all decay./He speaks up as tiny as an earphone/with Truman's asexual voice:/I am your dwarf./I am your enemy./I am the boss of your dreams.

In "The Twelve Dancing Princesses," Sexton writes of the old soldier's triumph: He had won. The dancing shoes would dance/no more. The princesses were torn from/their night life like a baby from a pacifier./Because he was old he picked the eldest./At the wedding the

princesses averted their eyes/and sagged like old sweatshirts./Now the runaways would run no more and never/again would their hair be tangled into diamonds,/never again their shoes worn down to a laugh,/never the bed falling down into purgatory/to let them climb in after/with their Lucifer kicking.

Sexton's brilliant poems work on two levels: They make us re-examine our assumptions about the characters in these old, familiar tales; they also challenge us to re-examine our assumptions about our own lives. Many of the poems speak to the particular position of women in modern culture. Fairy tales come from an oral tradition that has been passed on through the centuries primarily by women, and it seems fitting that modern women poets are making particular use of fairy tale themes. Sylvia Plath's "Cinderella" is a guilt-stricken girl haunted by the caustic ticking of the clock. Louise Gluck reflects on the aftermath of trauma in "Gretel in Darkness," as Gretel lies awake at night, still hearing the witch's cry break in the moonlight through a sheet of sugar. Olga Broumas includes a number of fairy tale poems in her beautiful collection *Beginning With O*. In her powerful version of "Cinderella" she talks about the plight of "the token woman": Apart from my sisters, estranged/from my mother, I am a woman alone/in a house of men/who secretly/call themselves princes, alone/with me usually, under cover of dark. I am the one allowed in/to the royal



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chambers, whose small foot conveniently/fills the slipper of glass. The woman writer, the lady/umpire, the madam chairman, anyone's wife./I know what I know. Emma Bull writes about the relationship between sisters in a poisonous household in another version of Cinderella called "The Stepsister's Story" (from *The Armless Maiden*): I knew you, dancing./She said, "Who is that?"/The others said it, too./But I knew./I thought the word she would not let me say./Sister. You danced by so close/I could have touched the tiny buttons down your back./I kept your secret, as true sisters do ... /I can't dance now./But I would sit on your hearth/And stir the fire to dancing with a crutch./Let me sit near your happiness./Let me warm myself at your laughter./Let me say at last, where she can't hear./Sister, sister, sister.

In the same volume, Delia Sherman writes about the tenacious love of daughters in her poem "Snow White to the Prince": Do you think I did not know her./Ragged and gnarled and stooped like a wind-bent tree./Her basket full of combs and pins and laces?/Of course I took her poisoned gifts. I wanted/To feel her hands coming out of my hair/To let her lace me up, to take an apple/From her hand, a smile from her lips./As when I was a child. Margaret Atwood turns to the painful German story "Girl Without Hands" in her latest collection (*The Burning House*): Then there's the girl, in the white dress,/meaning purity, or the failure/to be any color. She has no hands, it's true./The scream that happened to the air/when they were taken off/surrounds her now like an aureole/of hot sand, of no sound./Everything has bled out of her./Only a girl like this/Can know what's happened to you./If she were here she would/reach out her arms toward you/with her absent hands/and you would feel nothing, but you would be/touched all the same.

Jane Yolen's poignant "Beauty and the Beast: An Anniversary" was published in *The Faery Flag* and is also a song on British folksinger June Tabor's most recent CD, *Against the Streams*. I have no regrets, Beauty says, years later, reflecting on her life with the Beast: Though sometimes I do wonder/what sounds children/might have made/running across the marble halls,/swinging from the birches/over the roses/in the snow. Sandra Gilbert works with images from Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales in a sequence of love poems (in *Blood Pressure*) which includes "The Last Poem about the Snow Queen": You wanted to know "love" in all its habitats, wanted/to catalog the joints, the parts, the motions, wanted/to be a scientist of romance: you said/you had to study everything, go everywhere,/even here, even/this palace in the far north ... /Now you know this is the place/where water insists on being ice,/where wind insists on breathlessness,/where the will of the stone is so strong/that even the stone's desire for heat/is driven into the eye of night.

Sleeping Beauty is the single tale that has inspired the greatest number of poetic retellings. Howard Nemerov's version, about a young boy's reaction to the story,

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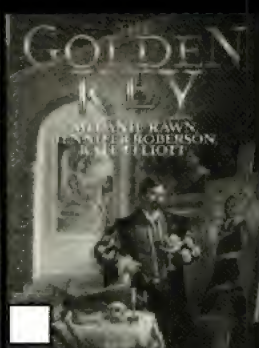
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comes from his *New and Selected Poems*: And I ask in my sleep, is this my sleep? Am I the one the world cannot find/Nor even the prince in the forest forsee?/... And shall I also, with the kiss, forget/That I was the one who dreamed them all./Courtier and king, scullion and cook./Horse in the stable and fly on the wall?/Forget the petal's whisper when they drift/Down where the untold princes die in blood/Because I dreamed the thicket and the thorn?

From Maxine Kumin's "The Archaeology of a Marriage" (Poetry 132, No. 1): When *Sleeping Beauty* Wakes up/she is almost fifty years old./Time to start planning her retirement cottage./The prince in sneakers stands thwacking/his squash racket. He plays/three nights a week at his club./it gets the heart action up./What he wants in the cottage/is a sauna and an extra-firm Beauty-/rest mattress, which she sees as an exquisite/sarcasm directed against her long slumber./Was it her fault he took so long/to hack his way through the brambles?/Why didn't he carry a chainsaw/like any sensible woodsman?/Why, for that matter, should any/twentieth-century woman/have to lie down at the prick of a spindle etcetera etcetera/and he is stung to reply/in kind and soon they are at it. The poet/songwriter Leonard Cohen has written: "You are brave," I told the *Sleeping Beauty*,/"to climb these steps into my home,/but I regret your man, the Kissing Prince, is gone."/You don't understand what story I am from," she said,/"we both know who lives in this garden."/Still, all those following nights/she never knew to call me Beast or Swan.

Charles Johnson uses the theme in a rather different way in "Sleeping Beauty" (from *I Heard a Scream in the Streets*): A Beautiful Black man/Sleeping in a corner/His mind wandering into the deepest of/Darkness/His suffering eyes closed/His mouth open wide as if he/Wants to eat up the White world/And spit it out into the hand/of the White man and then/wake up. From Hayden Carruth's *The Sleeping Beauty* (a book-length sequence of poems about war, communism and other society issues) comes: Oh, begin/In all and nothing then, the vision from a name/This Rose Marie Dorn,/Woman alive exactly when the Red Army came/To that crook of the Oder where she was born,/Woman who fled and fled in her human duty/And bore her name, meaning Rose in the Thorn,/Her name, the mythologos, the *Sleeping Beauty*.

In "Ripening" (from *The Berkeley Poet's Cooperative*), Noelle Caskey asks: *Sleeping Beauty* without her hedge of thorns?/Impossible!/The prince must prick himself/once, twice on the sharp spines/before he touches roses./This is no evil wish./It is a story./All women sleep, some/for a hundred years./The thorns/protect the dreaming rose/and spare unwary hunters/that blood-red awakening.

After *Sleeping Beauty*, the story of the Frog Prince seems to be the most popular with poets today. Robert Graves, Anne Sexton, Stevie Smith, and others have all made use of this classic tale, but Susan Mitchell's version (first published in *The New Yorker*) is one of the very best: At night I cannot sleep./I am lis-

tening for the dribble of mud/climbing the stairs to our bedroom/as if a child in a wet bathing suit/ran up them in the dark./ Last night I said, "Let's face it, you're bored./How many times can you live over/ the same excitement/that moment when the princess leans/into the well, her face a petal/falling to the surface of the water/as you rise like a bubble to her lips/the golden ball bursting from your mouth?"/Remember how she hurled you against the wall,/your body cracking open,/skin shrivelling to the bone,/the green pod of your heart splitting in two,/and her face imprinted with every moment of your transformation?

Little Red Riding Hood is recounted in a wild dialect form in James Whitcomb Riley's "Maymie's Story of Red Riding-Hood" (from *The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley*): W'y, one time wuz a little-weenty dirl,/An' she wuz named Red Riding-Hood, 'cause her — /Her Ma she maked a little red clak fer her/ At turnt up over her head.

Roald Dahl's version of the story can be found in his collection *Revolting Rhymes*: The small girl smiles. One eyelid flickers./She whips a pistol from her knickers./She aims it at the creature's head/And bang, bang, bang, she shoots him dead./A few weeks later in the wood/I came across Miss Riding Hood./But what a change! No cloak of red,/No silly hood upon her head./She said, "Hello, and do please note/My lovely furry wolfskin coat. Gwen Straus's version (from *Trail of Stones*) is from the wolf's point of view: Waiting in this old lady's ruffled bed,/I am all calculation. I have gone this far — /dressed in Grandmother's lace panties,/flannel nightgown and cap,/puffs of breath beneath the sheet/lift and fall. I can see my heart tick./Slightly. Slightly./These are small lies for a wolf,/but strangely heavy in my belly like stones./I will forget them as soon as I have her,/still, at this moment I do not like myself. Ellen Steiber reflects on the attraction of the wolf in "Silver and Gold" (from *Black Thorn, White Rose*): Is it any wonder that when the wolf appeared,/coat of silver, eyes of gold,/when the wolf sauntered toward me, kindly as you please,/and showed me fields of lavender and jessamine, hawkweed and flax — /purple and yellow and flame run wild, blue stolen from the skies ... /when he told me there was no need to be so grave when the wood was merry;/is it any wonder I went deeper and deeper into the green trees?

The story of Tam Lin is best known in its ballad version from the English-Scots border country, although it has also been collected in an oral fairy tale form. The following lines come from a contemporary Scottish poet, Liz Lochhead, who reworked the story into a wonderful ascerbic poem titled "Tam Lin's Lady": And if, as the story goes nines times out of ten — /he took you by the milk white hand and by the grassgreen sleeve/And laid you down on the bonnie bank and asked of you no leave,/well, so what?/You're not the first to fall for it,/good green girdle and all — /with your school tie rolled up in your pocket/trying to look eighteen. I know./All perfectly forgivable./Relax./What I do





Thomas Canty's Tam Lin (1985) illustrates the same ancient Scottish ballad on which the modern Scottish poet Liz Lochhead based a wonderful, acerbic poem.

think was a little dumb/if you don't mind my saying so/was to swallow that old one about you being/the only one who could save him./Oh I see — there was this lady/he couldn't get free of.

Seven years and more he'd sacrificed himself/and if you didn't help him he'd end up/a fairy forever. Enslaved!/  
Or worse still in hell without you./Well, well./So he stopped you from wandering in the forest/and picking pennyroyal and foxgloves/and making appointments and borrowing money for the abortion./He said all would be well

If only you'd trust him just this once/and go through what he was honest enough to admit in advance/would be hell and highwater for you./So he told you which relatives to pander to/and which to ignore./How to snatch him from the Old one/and hold on through thick and thin/through every change that happened ... /At any rate you were good and brave, you did/hang on, hang on tight./And in the end of course/everything turned out conventionally right/with the old witch banished to her corner lamenting./cursing his soft heart and the fact that she couldn't keep him./and

Continued on page 75

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*The lilies of the field do not toil — but perhaps they'd like to ...*

# GOLDFISH

BY PENI R. GRIFFIN

*Illustration by Jody Williams*

HE SWAM AMONG THE LOTUS roots, the others giving way before him. Restlessly he moved from a world of trailing vegetation to one of webbed feet and concrete reefs, and back again, the scenery above an eternal blur. He drifted from brightness to shadow, rising toward a vast desire — rising —

The man they called Michael Sandoval opened his eyes. His roommate's snoring scratched the dark. Michael played with the cord above his bed till the blind stayed at the top of the window, letting in gray light. Earl grunted, rolled over, and glared at him from under a fold of blanket. "What the hell you doing?"

"Sento," Michael apologized. "I didn't mean to wake tu. I had the dream."

With some effort — for his legs did not work — Earl turned his back to Michael and the cautious morning light. Michael rose, almost meeting his daily self-challenge to reach the bathroom without grabbing anything. He had most of an hour till the alarm. He would try to dress himself all alone.

When the alarm rang at seven, he was slipping his shoes on. "You dumb Meskin," groaned Earl. "You'll be out on the street before you know."

"I like the street," said Michael.



He got a better reaction from Angie, when he stopped at the table where she ate breakfast with the other physical therapists, and told her his accomplishment. "Earl says you'll put me on the street any day now," he told her.

Angie laughed. "He's just jealous."

"Earl can dress himself a long time," objected Michael.

"Yeah, and he stopped there a long time, too," said Angie. Michael was not sure he understood her, though he knew all the words she used.

It was Mamacita's day to visit, after physical therapy and language class. Michael didn't understand most of Mamacita's words, but he did his best. She brought pan dulce and regarded him with tender wistfulness. When she showed him a picture of a brown child in a red dress and told him su hija era una muchacha de creces rapidos, he had no reaction. "Era una muchacha pretty," he said, feeling that Mamacita wanted something more of him.

After visiting hours he wandered through the open institute buildings to the day room of his cottage, where various patients stared

ished physical therapy with one of the spastic children, and he joined them, pushing the wheelchair on the lawn between the cottages. The day was gently warm, and the child fell asleep. Angie looked down at her with a sweet, Mamacita-like expression. Michael remembered to ask her what he wanted to know.

"Why does Mamacita visit me?"

"Because she wants to see how you're doing," said Angie.

"Why? She isn't a doctor."

"Oh, Lord." Michael knew from those words that he had asked a complex question. "You understand why you're having to learn to do things other people already know, don't you?"

"Dr. Tieleke says I used to know, and forgot one day."

"And you know the difference between a child and an adult."

"Sí."

"Think about this, then. Once, you were a child, and you had to learn what you're relearning now. Someone had to teach you."

"Didn't tu?" Michael blinked at her.

Angie shook her head, smiling. "No.

Michael was not supposed to see Dr. Tieleke today, so he stored the question in the back of his roomy and echoing brain; but it kept floating to the surface, disturbing the tranquility of the day. That night, after the lights went out and Earl began to snore, he attempted to remember. A burst of light, sound, smell, and vulnerability marked the furthest backward extension of his senses. Before that, what? Water — restlessness — soggy bread, and a fragmented, colorless sun — unnoticed, he passed from memory to dream.

"Why did I forget?" Michael asked Dr. Tieleke next day, plunking the question down in the middle of the book-crammed office before the doctor could distract him with other topics.

Dr. Tieleke was the single great authority in Michael's life; a reliable fountain of words, concepts, and explanations. "I don't know," he said, with perfect equanimity. "I wish I did."

Michael sat stunned. "Why don't you?" he demanded.

"What happened to you has never happened before." Dr. Tieleke spoke slowly, giving words and ideas a chance to settle before disturbing them with new ones. The mock-

# *What happened to you has happened before. People have forgotten parts Some people have even forgotten all of it, But they all forgot because of some*

blankly at TV. A thought struck Michael. "You never get visitors," he said to his roommate.

"No shit, Sherlock," answered Earl, eyes on the screen.

"Why not?" asked Michael.

"Cause nobody gives a damn."

"Why not?"

"Why should they?" Earl dragged his attention away from the commercial. "Nobody does nothing without a reason."

Michael thought about this. "Angie gives a damn."

"Angie's paid to. You know what paid is, boy? It's money. Without money, you don't live. She cares, or else."

Michael decided to let the new point slide for the moment — as far as he knew, he didn't have money, and he lived — to pursue the first. "No one pays me. I care."

Earl glared at him before turning back to the TV. "That's 'cause you don't know no better."

Michael wandered off. Angie had just fin-

Mamacita did."

"So why doesn't she now?"

"Because it's easier to teach a normal child to take care of himself than it is to teach an adult who's forgotten. Mamacita doesn't know how."

"Why does she still care? If it's not her job any more?"

"Because you don't stop caring about the children you raise."

Michael thought about that. "Do I hurt Mamacita's feelings that I don't remember her?" he asked.

"Probably," said Angie, "but she knows it's not your fault."

Ever afterward, Michael dated his life from that point; walking up to the spastic children's cottage, turning the wheelchair over to the waiting nurse, and thinking, for the first time, to ask: "Why did I forget?"

"I don't know. You'd better ask Dr. Tieleke that."

ingbird outside the window, the dust motes in the sun, tugged at Michael's attention; but he ignored them. "People have forgotten parts of their lives. Some people have even forgotten all of it, like you did. But they all forgot because of some trauma."

"Trauma," Michael repeated, to indicate a meaningless word.

"Trauma is any event that's almost unimaginably bad."

"You mean — like Earl's accident."

"That's right. Sometimes trauma is so terrible that the subconscious — " he paused. Michael, remembering the word from previous sessions, nodded. "The subconscious will decide not to deal with things that are too bad to handle. Most people who forget their whole lives remember how to walk and speak, because they can deal with those things. Do you understand that?"

Michael nodded. "So forgetting is como Earl when he gets tired. He won't try any more."



"Yes — yes, that's a good analogy." Dr. Tieleke's smile was so pleased Michael forgot to ask what an analogy was. "In your case, though, the only trauma was the loss of memory. Nothing was physically wrong with you, and you were having a pleasant day. Yet you suddenly fell to the pavement, having forgotten everything you'd learned since you were a baby. We can only guess why."

"What do you guess?"

Dr. Tieleke looked uncomfortable. "We don't have enough facts to build a reliable hypothesis — a good guess."

"So you have *ninguno*? At all?"

"Well — only a silly one."

"It won't sound silly to me," Michael pointed out.

Dr. Tieleke chuckled. "I guess it won't hurt. I didn't have any guesses, good or bad, till you told me about your fish dreams. I remembered something your — the person you were with at the time you forgot — told me. She told me you had been looking at a big fish, and said you wanted to be one."

"Why would I want to be a fish?" asked Michael.

"Why wouldn't you?" countered Dr. Tieleke.

*never  
of their lives.  
like you did.  
trauma.*

"They do nada. I'd be like Earl — bored, always."

"You feel that way now. Then you felt that being cool, and fed, and under no obligation to work, would be a good thing."

"I said that?"

"Something like that. Now, though we don't know of any specific trauma, you had — a variety of problems we needn't go into. It has happened that unusually unhappy people have created new selves. We call this split personality. Do you follow me?"

Michael nodded. At least he did not feel confused on any point he recognized as significant.

"My guess is that your subconscious tried to give you an alternate personality as a fish. When this didn't work, it wiped your memory clean and left you to start over again." Dr. Tieleke leaned back. "All my colleagues get to the part about your turning yourself into a fish and break down laughing."

Michael felt swamped. He had intended to



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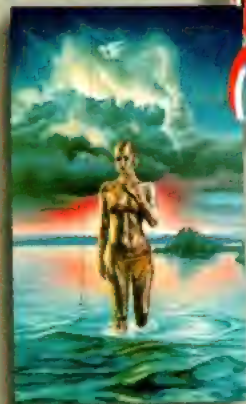
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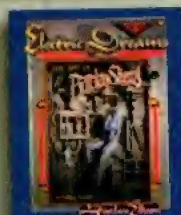
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learn all about his disorder, conquer it, and drive the hurt look out of Mamacita's eyes by remembering her; but if things had been so bad that the life of a fish had seemed preferable, perhaps they were all better off as they were. Why should he have been unhappy?

He turned this question over in his mind for several days. Within his limited memory he had never been unhappy outside of his fish dreams. He decided to ask an expert.

One evening, as rain dripped past the windows and the TV droned in the day room, Earl taught him checkers. He was not a good teacher, unsmiling at his pupil's small successes. When Michael got all the way across the board and said: "King me!" Earl topped his piece and scowled. "You learn too damn quick."

"I feel like I learn too damn slow," said Michael. "Why are tu siempre down on everything?"

"Why shouldn't I be?" grumbled Earl, glancing at his legs.

"Those will get better if you try."

"It's no business of yours."

"I want appendar."

"Yeah, that's your trouble," said Earl, sav-

# The water one moment of pulled away The vine-draped

agely. "Always wanting to know and learn and do and what all. And where will it get you? Back on the streets, working for a living! No more free meals — no more looking at TV all day at government expense."

"I don't like TV. It gives me a headache."

Earl ignored the interruption. "You'll be out on your ass crying to forget again while I'm all cozy in here with Angie on my back to work harder. But she can't make me do it!"

Michael picked his way through this tirade as well as he could. "You ain't happy, but you want to stay. No comprendo."

"Happiness is a gyp. People like Angie stretch their mouths out of shape, but they go home tired all the same and they die just as soon. All that grinning don't do them a lick of good."

"But doesn't it feel better to be happy?"

"You're such a moron," said Earl, wheeling away.

Next day, after a strenuous and satisfying



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morning of language practice, he found Angie in the cafeteria. "Why should people be unhappy?" he asked, cutting his baked fish and noticing, with a jolt of glee, that he wasn't concentrating on the act.

"Oh, Lord," Angie sighed. "Why do you ask such hard questions?"

"Quiero know. I asked Earl, but he wasn't helpful."

"Why'd you even bother?"

"I thought he'd know all about it."

"If unhappy people understood unhappiness, they'd get over it better." She chewed, staring over his head. Michael watched her face. Hers was his favorite face. "Everybody's unhappy sometimes. Things go wrong. You get tired. It creeps up on you. People who don't look for reasons to be happy stay depressed. Earl's like that. He blames his legs, but really it's his whole approach to life. It takes work to be happy, and he won't work."

"So people who work are happy and people who don't aren't?" That sounded too simple.

"Not quite." Angie's forehead puckered as she mopped up her tartar sauce. "It's happiness itself you have to work on."

"You were a lazy bum," said Angie, not unkindly. "You had a talent, which you used as an excuse. You let other people take care of you when you could've fended for yourself, and you let people down. You weren't like you a bit."

AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR OF STEADY progress, Michael was judged competent to go home for Thanksgiving. Angie, Dr. Tieleke, and his language coach worked overtime with him, so that he confidently approached the unfamiliar people crammed into his father's house. Almost at once, Mamacita floored him by bringing forth a child and instructing her diga "buenos dias" a Daddy.

She hung back shyly, staring, and he stared back. So that was why Mamacita kept showing him pictures of this girl! Ruth, that was her name. "Hi, Ruth," he said.

She ducked her head and whispered: "Hi, Daddy."

"Show him your turkey you made," prompted Mamacita. Ruth led him to the living room, where a bird made from construction paper perched on the coffee table. Michael thought it wonderful. "Can you

"I don't care if you remember! I let Ruth stay here because your mother thought it was important, but I don't care one thing about you, so don't you try to worm your way back in! You're nothing to me and I'm nothing to you and that's how I want it!"

"But —" Michael thought he must have misunderstood something. "If I'm Ruth's father and you're her mother, doesn't that make me your husband and you my wife?" Angie said —

"Ex-wife," said Yolanda. "Not married any more and never will be again. Have a good time in your institution!"

Watching them go, Michael thought he knew what it felt like to be unhappy. It was like confusion, only deeper.

When his brother dropped him off at the institute, he went looking for Angie, or Dr. Tieleke, or somebody; but only the bare minimum staff was on hand. Even Earl was already asleep. He had to wait till morning. Dr. Tieleke was eating a sweet roll and coffee when Michael found him in the cafeteria. "Did you know I have a daughter?" he demanded.

The doctor looked at him in surprise. "Who told you that?"

*WAS as deep as Earl's boredom. One misstep, bad balance, and it would have him. Michael from the parapet, cold sweat all over his body. walls of the quarry loomed.*

"So when I was unhappy before, I wasn't trying to be happy?"

Angie stopped chewing, looked at him sharply, and finished her bite. "Who told you you were unhappy before?"

"Dr. Tieleke."

"Oh. I guess it's all right, then." She looked annoyed.

"Did you know I was sad?" asked Michael, intrigued.

"I wouldn't've ever mentioned it to you. Knowing you were unhappy doesn't give you much incentive to remember, does it?"

"I want to remember," said Michael, slowly, trying to lure the entire truth out of his mouth. "Quiero make Mamacita happy. Si I was sad because I wasn't trying, remembering shouldn't be malo. You sure that's what was wrong with me?"

"You really ought to talk to Dr. Tieleke about this."

"I will. What was wrong with me?"

show me how to do that?" he asked. So she took him into a corner, and showed him.

Throughout the long weekend he spent in the bosom of his family, new concepts burst upon him every half-hour. Ruth, Pilgrims, home cooking, chores, friendly quarrels, Spanish and English as separate entities, mass — Yolanda.

Yolanda came to take Ruth home with her after Sunday dinner. She was a lean, worried-looking woman, to whom Ruth ran, crying: "Hi, Mommy!" Michael hung back, trying to react, and failing.

Yolanda turned cold, hard eyes on him. "Well," she said, in a voice almost like Earl's, "how are you?"

Michael stared at her, groping through his brain. "I don't remember you," he blurted. "I'm sorry, but I don't remember."

"I know," she said. "It's handy, isn't it?"

"No," said Michael. "I wish I remembered. I —"

"She was at Mamacita's for Thanksgiving." Dr. Tieleke frowned. "I told them not to do that yet!"

"Why shouldn't I know about my daughter?"

"Your personal life was in a complicated state at the time you lost your memory," said Dr. Tieleke slowly. "I thought it would be better for you not to have to deal with it yet."

"I think you were wrong!" declared Michael. "And I think you should tell me why Yolanda is my ex-wife, and why she's mad at me."

"Your family is not a great one for following instructions," said Dr. Tieleke, "but all right. I'll bring out your file. But you may not like what you learn."

"I don't think it's important that I like it."

They spent two weeks going through the file. Michael found that he had never completed his education; never held a job for a full year; been divorced after less than two years,





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because Yolanda said he neglected her and Ruth. He had said he was an artist — someone who drew pictures for a living — but hardly ever sold a picture. He was supposed to give Yolanda money to help with Ruth, and to see his daughter fairly often; but had only done either occasionally. Well past the age when most people look after themselves, he had lived with Mamacita like a child.

"I feel bad about Ruth," he told Angie during her lunch break one day. They sat in the back of the cafeteria, and she listened to everything; though she could have been eating with other physical therapists and talking about things of interest to normal people. "I was the world's worst daddy."

"Believe me, there have been much worse daddies than you," said Angie. "I doubt you damaged her."

"I don't understand why I didn't want to see her. Did you know she was with me the day I forgot?"

Angie nodded. "Young children are like rubber balls. I bet she doesn't even remember."

"I don't care. All that time, I wouldn't see her, and Yolanda finally makes me take her

about money, and how you can't get anything without it, except from family; but when I asked who was paying for me he said not to worry about it. So who is paying?"

"Your family pays what they can, and the government and the institute take up the slack."

Michael had gleaned a vague conception of the government from one of his brothers. "So everyone pays for my living but me."

"That's an extreme way of looking at it," said Dr. Tieleke.

Michael walked from the window, to the bookshelves, to the door, to the desk. "So Angie's right. I'm a lazy bum."

Dr. Tieleke looked startled. "She said that?"

"She said I used to be. Mamacita and la familia took care of me all my life, and now the whole world takes care of me. Yolanda is working herself to death taking care of my daughter and I don't help any. It isn't fair. So what do I do to get money?"

"That depends. What do you want to do?"

"Anything! It doesn't matter." But it did matter. The wild turkey in the picture above the filing cabinet taunted him with its clean,

*Even if both Michael  
have not proved that they are  
separated from the body by  
jaunts and returning — all are*

to the zoo. And what do I do? I tell her I wish I was a fish and fall down in a fit!"

"That wasn't your fault."

"Wasn't it?" Michael considered all the things Dr. Tieleke had told him about amnesia. "People forget because they can't cope. I must not've been able to cope with Ruth. That sucks!"

"Yes," said Angie, "but things are different now."

"That's right," said Michael. "Now I'm going to cope!"

MICHAEL SPENT CHRISTMAS WITH HIS FAMILY, and came back to the institute with his resolve well-hardened. "Who's paying my way?" he demanded of Dr. Tieleke, walking in for his session on the third of January.

"Your way? You mean, paying for you to stay here?"

"Yes." Michael walked to the window, and felt the cold glass. Outside, the institute was yellow, green, and white. "My father told me

strong lines. "I found a case in my closet at home. A portfolio. With pictures. Mamacita said I drew them."

"You used to be an artist, you know."

"I used to call myself an artist, you mean." But they had been — well, they had not been bad. Pictures of his family, especially Ruth; of flowers, and bridges, and fruit; most of them unfinished. When he tried to simulate them, his hand put down faint lines resembling nothing. "I think — I would like to learn to draw again, but it doesn't matter. Whatever I have to do."

"Cleaning floors around here?"

Michael spoke to the janitors in Spanish sometimes. They were friendly, and complained a lot — of backaches, and the kinds of messes made by the patients who had trouble getting to the bathroom. Earl was worse to janitors than he was to anyone else. Michael shrugged. "If that's all I can do."

"You'll be able to do a lot better than that," Dr. Tieleke assured him. "But it's going to



take awhile, and be hard work. You don't even know how to read yet. Would you like to go into a class with the retarded children?"

EVERYONE ASSURED MICHAEL THAT HIS progress was phenomenal, but compared to the distance he had to go it felt pitiful. One fact led into another, one skill into a more difficult one, each more fascinating and unsuspected than the one before. As vistas opened inside his head, the institute grounds constricted.

He no longer needed physical therapy, but Angie taught him to drive and escorted him on weekends, introducing him to movies, the River Walk, and art museums. "Institutional outings," scowled Earl. "I don't see what you want to go be gawked at for."

"I don't get gawked at," said Michael, lacing up the tennis shoes he had bought with this janitor money. "Anybody notices us thinks I'm just a guy with his sister or his girlfriend, maybe."

"Girlfriend," growled Earl. "Don't you go getting ideas about Angie. She feels sorry for you. That's all."

"If she was sorry she wouldn't laugh so

prince that tried to be human but doesn't have a soul." He knew all about souls. Mamacita took him to mass Sundays. "It reminded me, and I had the fish dream." Michael swallowed. "Where — where was I when I wished to be a fish?"

"You'd taken Ruth to the zoo and then the Sunken Gardens."

"Is it far?"

"Not especially." Angie flicked him one glance. "You don't want to go there, do you?"

"Is there a reason not to?"

"I don't know what Dr. Tieleke'd think about it."

"Dr. Tieleke's the one who didn't think I should see Ruth last Thanksgiving," Michael pointed out, without rancor.

"Well — don't expect anything. Your attack was in June. Everything'll look different."

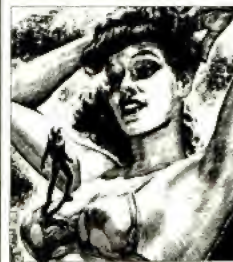
"I don't expect anything. I just want to see it."

Sunken Gardens was a limestone bowl of flowers on the edge of a crowded park. In spring it would be violent with color, but now the paths and flowerbeds criss-crossing the lotus ponds were gentle under Septem-

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*and the fish have souls, you transferable. I've heard of souls death, live souls taking short backed by shaky evidence ...*

much. Did you ever have a girlfriend?"

"None of your business." Earl turned the page of the magazine he had taken from the day room.

"It's none of your business what I do, either," Michael pointed out. "What's it like to have a girlfriend?"

"It's a gyp!"

"Is there anything not a gyp?"

"No!"

He and Angie had been going to go to the art gallery on Jones Avenue that day, but the September air was warm and golden, and Michael found he did not want to be inside. "I had the fish dream last night," he said, as they pulled onto the highway.

"Again? It's been a long time, hasn't it?"

"Since spring. I was reading in a book about mermaids — there aren't mermaids, are there?"

"No. They're make-believe."

"It was a good story, but it made me cry. About the little mermaid in love with a


ber's tired heat. They bought sno-cones at the pavilion near the top and followed the paths down to the bridge where Angie thought that he had been.

Color streaked the limestone water, rising and sinking aimlessly. The creatures below resembled the goldfish in the classroom aquarium, but they were one- and two-feet long, their orange scales splotched black and white. They negotiated the roots of the lotus pads like bright leviathans, peering back at Michael (so it seemed to him) with flat, uninterested eyes.

"How do they get so big?" he wondered.

"Fish'll grow as long as they live," said Angie, "and there's nothing to kill them. No chemicals, no predators, plenty of food — this is goldfish heaven."

"I wanted to go to goldfish heaven," Michael tried, but he couldn't imagine it. Nothing to do, nothing to learn — no one to care about, and nothing to be done even if you did care.



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A monstrous fish rose from the depths — at least three feet long, his sides patched in gold, black, and white. "Look at that bugger," said Angie. "He must be as old as you are."

"I wish we had some bread or something," said Michael. That was the only variety down there — the taste and texture of soggy bread as opposed to peanuts, or flies, or luscious, gooey larvae.

"That fella ain't going to starve to death," said a gardener, passing with his tools on his shoulder. "That's El Jefe."

"You name the fish?" asked Angie.

"Only him. He's the big boss fish. Anybody shoves in front of that one when they're throwing out the peanuts or the ladies are laying eggs gets what's coming to him."

"Is he living his whole life here?" asked Michael.

"The water connects up to the zoo. They go back and forth."

"It's not much space to move in."

The creature swam away through the

hers, found her mouth, and kissed her.

The number of fascinating sensations this simple act sparked all over him drove fear away as suddenly as it had arrived. When he stopped to assess them, Angie pulled away from him gently. "I was wondering when that was going to happen," she said.

"Is something wrong?"

Angie smiled at him. "Everything's fine. You've opened up a whole new can of worms, but it was bound to open sometime. Just back off on it for a little while, OK? You all right now?"

"I think so. What can of worms —?"

"Oh, Lord," said Angie.

IN SPRING, EARL COMPLAINED THAT THE FEELING was returning in one of his hips.

Yolanda married a young man with a bank job. Michael bought them a slow-cooker, and spent the duration of their honeymoon at Mamacita's, with Ruth. They helped each other with homework,

MICHAEL LEARNED TO MAKE LOVE WITH Angie in her apartment on a brilliant August afternoon. Afterward, he lay on his back; weak, helpless, and happy. "This wasn't what it was like."

He felt Angie's limp body come alert. Her voice was carefully neutral. "What what was like?"

"Reproducing. Before." Michael yawned, hovering in his own memory like a limestone pool. "We didn't touch each other."

"What do you mean?"

"We just di-in —" He yawned. Beyond the open windows a plane droned and locusts chattered. "Everything was outside."

"With Yolanda?"

"I don't remember Yolanda. Lots of others — she laid the eggs, and I — kind of sprayed them —"

"Oh, Lord!" laughed Angie. "You're remembering the fish again!"

DR. TIELEKE WROTE MONOGRAPHS AND

## *Michael hung onto her, shoving the water and the slow life of the pond away with the warmth and the rich human smell of her.*

bridge's shadow. "There's plenty of room for him," said the gardener. "He's only a fish."

The water was as deep as Earl's boredom below them. One misstep, one moment of bad balance, and it would have him. Michael pulled away from the parapet, cold sweat all over his body. The vine-draped walls of the quarry loomed. He ran, grabbing rails whenever he found them, pushing past a family coming in, and collapsing on the curb across from the zoo.

"Mike?" Angie's hand upon his shoulder was inadequate. He did not feel safe till she wrapped her arms around him and rocked him back and forth. "What's the matter?"

"I won't go back," he gasped. "I don't want to go back!"

"No one's going to make you go anywhere you don't want to."

Michael hung onto her, shoving the water and the slow life of the pond away with the warmth and the rich human smell of her. He remembered something he had seen on TV and wondered about. Now was the time to try it; now, before the waters enveloped him. He pressed his face against

drew pictures, and went to the zoo. Neither of them mentioned Sunken Gardens, or paid any attention to the monstrous fish moving through the moats of the waterfowl enclosures.

The night he returned, Michael came in late, slipped on a wet patch, and did not like the smell in the room. He switched on the light. The floor and Earl's bed were brilliant red.

Remembering a TV scene, Michael grabbed a shirt and wrapped his roommate's bleeding wrists as tightly as he could. Earl moaned. "What a gyp," he muttered. "What do you care, anyway?"

"I'll care if I want to!" said Michael, securing his knot, and running to fetch the night nurse.

Earl had to stay in the infirmary for three weeks. Michael visited daily to play checkers or dominoes. "That was a stupid thing to do," he chided. "You were getting better. Now you'll have to have extra sessions with Dr. Tieleke, and everything. They may even put you in a ward instead of a cottage."

"At least they ain't going to kick me out any time soon," said Earl, with grim satisfaction.

conducted experiments on what he called the Goldfish Delusion. Michael made no objection, but was not interested. His hands and eyes were getting the hang of drawing again, and on his third attempt he passed his GED with a B average. Armed with this and a couple of drafting courses, he set out into the wilds of San Antonio in search of a job.

The bus travel this involved gave him time to read. Although Angie and Dr. Tieleke attempted to steer him toward classics and useful non-fiction, Michael was apt to pick up the nearest book — math text, romance novel, comic — and read it through from copyright notice to index. He loved the act of absorbing symbols and understanding them, and content made no difference.

Homecoming through a chill March rain, crowded by damp people, he read the story that revealed all to him.

"I know what's wrong with me!" he crowed to Earl, bursting into the room.

Earl removed his socks. "Bus late?"

"No, I missed my stop because of read-

*Continued on page 76*



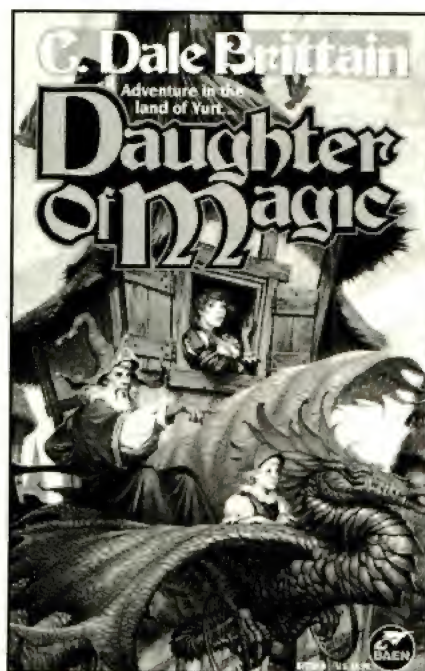
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Tanith Lee knows that a glimpse  
of the forbidden offers ecstasy first,  
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# DEATH LOVES ME

BY TANITH LEE

*Illustration by Todd Lockwood*

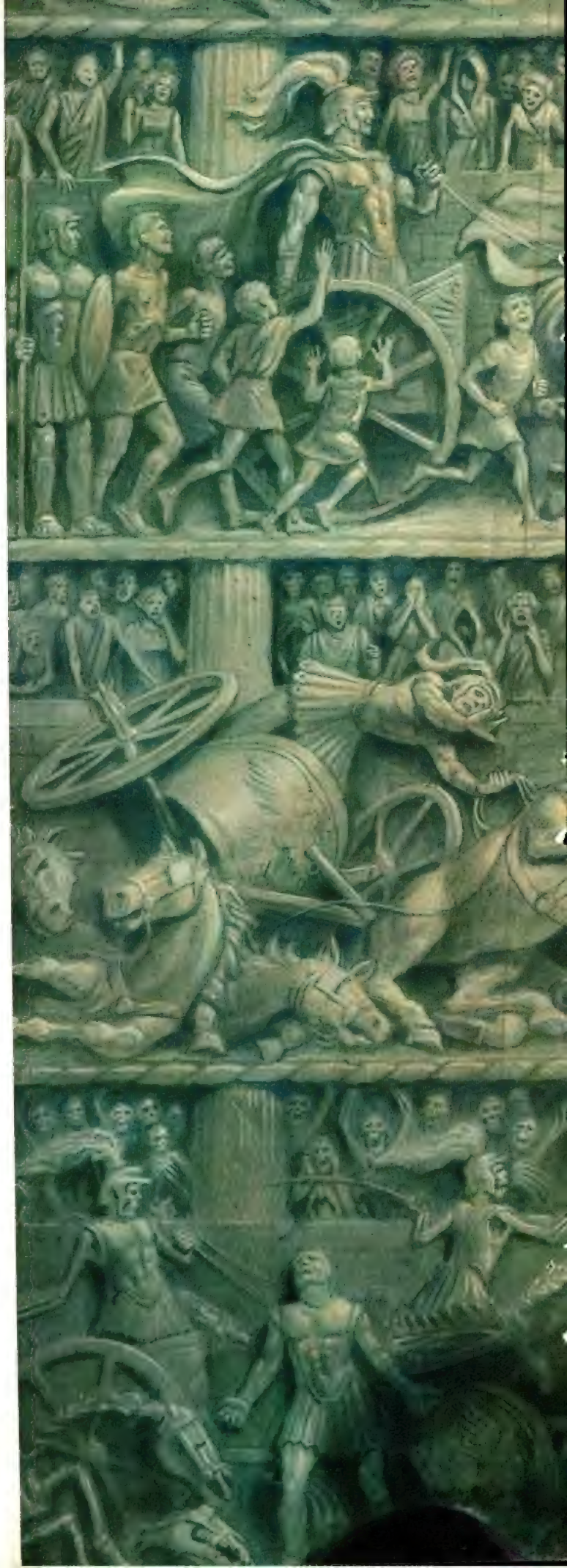
*Fate follows him that runs before Eudorios*

SITTING IN THE TAVERN AFTER THE race, it was just because he had not seen her, that he began to shiver. The three rich men with him, buying him Thracian wine since he had won for them, never noticed, or put it down to nerves, the kind a thoroughbred horse might exhibit. When he was shot of them, and went out in the dusk, the summer air was heavy and ripe over the port. Down below, the ships lay at anchor, and the stink of turning fish rose from the market. But there was incense too from the temple of Kore, and the smell of oranges and pomegranates from her groves. The day was flying, and lamps coming alight like jewels. As a child, he had liked this time, it had seemed magic to him the way men could make light return, though darkness drew her cloak across the world.

On the plaster of the inn wall some educated drunk had scribbled, *Xetis it is who loves me*. Evidently he did not know the reputation of Xetis.

Lukon walked back up the hill to the stadium, and looked in on his horses, which, well-groomed and fed, stood burnished as coals in the torchlight, tossing up their long heads for his caress.

"You did well, my dears, did I tell you? You, Bull, so strong, and you, Bird, fleet as an arrow.









And my clever Eros. Yes, my love. My son, my brother." Lukon embraced them all. They were his family. He had no other, probably wanted none. "I'm sorry I left you to the boy. But he's seen to you very well, and he needs to learn — but, no excuses. It wasn't what I should have done. No, Bull, you shake your head. No. But I wasn't myself. You know I can't say. You know I don't tell you that one thing. But there it is."

Lukon had come from the chariot, the sweat streaming on him, and the garland of victory on his head, and puked behind the bathhouse, as if it had been his first race.

It was because she had not been there, in the crowd. Although he had scanned it closely, skinned it with his eyes. Nowhere. The first race in seven races he had not seen her. And he had been sure, although this had only come to him when the race was done, that this time she would be in the very front of all the benches, right up against the barrier of the track. Yes, he had been certain of that.

He stood staring now at the temple of Kore. Should he go in? She was not here in her aspect of shadow, but shown as a young girl, with the poppies painted red in her hands. But he did not like priests. Not since he had been poor years ago, and seen what they really were.

Instead he turned away, up toward the houses by the tent-makers. Tilat was there, who would welcome him. She would send the slave running for cakes and flowers and wine. She would lie back and draw him down against her pale smooth body. He had won the race, embraced the horses, got drunk. What else was there, now, but Tilat?

"SHALL I SING YOU THE SONG ABOUT THE DOVE?"

"If you like." His voice — ungracious, unkind. He amended, "Any song is good, if you sing it."

"You don't think so."

"Yes, of course I do, Tilat."

She turned her face a little away, her dark hair shining under its chaplet of flowers, the loose robe slipping from her burnished shoulder. She had been, as always, pumiced and soft and fragrant. She had rejoiced at him and made the evening into a festival, but once he had possessed her, he had known she was, after all, not the same. Her little cries might not have been real. At supper she was sulky. He should have brought her a present, she preferred it, to money. He said, "I don't deserve your sweetness, Tilat. I'm sorry."

"When I love you so much," she said.

"I know. You're my darling."

"And you won. I heard them cheering, the way they do only for you."

"Or for Shaizek," he said.

She made a sharp little gesture. "Shaizek — what is he? An Egyptian. A foreigner."

It might have amused Lukon, for Red Shaizek had raced in many places and was highly thought of, besides which Tilat, with her Semitic eyes and the moon-coins in her ears, was no less a foreigner herself.

"You didn't come to watch me, then."

"A respectable woman can't go there, except veiled. And you know, one can see *nothing* through a veil."

This too he might have laughed at. Was she trying to entertain? Or would she take affront? She was quite wealthy from his patronage, and from that of others before him. Even so, she was hardly — *respectable*. And he had seen her first, unveiled, or barely, sitting in the women's stands where no "respectable" woman was ever allowed, with a crowd of five other girls such as she, her friends.

That had been at a time, last year, when he had only seen, *that other one*, rarely. He could count them on one hand, the times he had seen her. Until this last month.

Tilat's wine was sour in his mouth. He did not wish to be here. He must go, insult Tilat by leaving her before the sand had even run from her day-clock, marking midnight.

"I think you're tired of me," she said.

"Not at all. Some trouble, Tilat. It's made me unsociable and I regret that."

Tilat raised her face, and taking up the little harp, began to strum the sad melody of the dove song. The notes fell like beads into the lamp-lit pool of the room, and oddly detained him. "*She mourns, poor dove, for her lost lover. Caroo, caroo. She mourns for him. Her broken heart, I pity her, for once I flew as flew this dove. Caroo, caroo.*"

Lukon drew an apricot from the silver dish, and turned it in his fingers. His hand was muscular, calloused, and brown, scarred white across the knuckles. All of him was this way. A man of brown marble with pieces chipped and ripped out of it. Why did she like him, and the other girls who liked him too, and not only Lukon, but any successful charioteer. Did they not say, in the lower streets, *Lying with Death* — Death took the form of a king to a woman, Hades, also a charioteer. But for a man: Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, Kore the Maiden.

The song had stopped.

Lukon said "Tilat — can I tell you a secret?"

Her little face flashed up. Her eyes flashed too, with sudden tears. "You love elsewhere. You're done with me, and came to say so."

"No — no, Tilat. Pretty girl." He dropped the apricot and went to her, and held her, gentling her, as once, one horrible time when he was only sixteen, he had held and stroked the golden neck of a broken horse, quieting it, before the merciful smith smashed in its skull. And as he thought of that, the tears, to which only his horses now could move him, coursed down his face.

Weeping, they lay on the mosaic floor, and presently made love again with a clutching violence. Her scream was real enough now and he was drowned in her. Spent, he rested against her breast, and soon they rose, and he told her, as he had never told another in all of the past five years it had been his to tell.

**I**UST AFTER LAMP-LIGHTING, URTEMIS STOOD on the house roof, gazing down toward the port, and seeing something quite other. Below in the house was the familiar evening movement, and the faint smell of cooking, and of flowers.

*When I was young, Urtemis thought, I should have wept if he were not coming home to supper.*

That, of course, was long ago. She, who had been wed to her husband at fourteen, was now ten years older. She had, through those years, grown accustomed to the ways of a man, learning that, although he might honor her and be well-pleased with her, still he might also wish often to be elsewhere, and sometimes in the company of other women. She had been warned long before her wedding of the customs of the two sexes, that she must be circumspect and chaste, and he at liberty.

She had always loved him. From the moment they had let her peep around the screen, and see him ride into the courtyard, and dismounting so gracefully, for in those days he was an athlete, and stand under the tree of green figs. He was very tall, with fair, gilded skin, black and curling hair, and eyes as blue, she believed, as the ocean.

It was a lucky marriage. His wealth and status — everyone had been delighted. And even he, drawing up her veil for the first time in the lamplight, had said to her things she did not ever forget. When she did not quicken with child, Urtemis had sought a wisewoman at her own mother's instigation. And then had come a strange regime, potions that stank and after which she chewed mint leaves, for fear he would smell them on her and be sickened. Curious amulets under the pillow, under the bed frame. Nothing worked. She was barren, she had disappointed. Then the wisewoman — another one by this



time — had said, "There is always this, you won't lose your looks as a mother may."

Urtemis saw now before her what she had just seen in her apartment below, her own face swimming in the bronze Egyptian mirror, between its upright ibises of gold. The bronze was kind and did not show the dry thin cuts at either side of her mouth, and at the corners of her eyes. The mirror still showed Urtemis the wholeness of her beauty, and the wheat-gold of her hair coiled upon her head.

She need have no fears. She was lovely, and besides the legal wife of Karestes, who once had exclaimed, kissing her fourteen-year-old breasts, *These are the doves of Aphrodite herself!*

Urtemis turned from the unseen view of the town, the fading violet of the sky. She went down again into the house of her husband, across the floors of marble that glimmered at this hour like still water.

She looked into the supper room, where perhaps he would come, or not, to dine alone, and if so she might wait on him, and sit by him, and eat sweetmeats from his hand, and place the garland on his darkly curling hair that had now a little gray in it, and lastly lead him, she faint with desire, to their chamber.

It was not that she had ever experienced physical ecstasy in his arms. She did not know how to take such a gift — of which she had heard only the coarsest whispers. The holy joy she knew was emotional, a paroxysm of surrender verging on the spiritually divine. It was this she longed for, this she pined for, when he removed his body and gave it instead to other women.

Feet ran lightly along the watery floors.

"Lady."

"He will not be home tonight," she said.

The slave lowered her head, and her face, its eyes cast down, was like a stony mask.

"IT IS A WOMAN OF THE DOCKS."

"No. No, he hasn't any reason to go there. It's the new one, the Rhodian hetaira —"

"Lady, why should I lie to you?"

Urtemis looked into the lizard gaze of this wisewoman, who was yet another wisewoman. Along with her bag of unguents, herbs, and charms, she might bring news for a price, and had done so.

*One day, I shall be as old as she is. Who will help me then?*

"He has — gone with many women. Never a woman of the streets. Karestes is a great man —"

"Great men like sometimes to descend. She's called Phebo. She lives now in a little house behind the market. She has a knack of pretense."

"What do you mean?"

"She makes believe to be certain things she isn't. Very young, perhaps little more than a child. Or some sort of animal."

Urtemis shuddered. "I don't want to hear."

"You asked to hear," said the woman sullenly, fingering the cloth Urtemis had given her with coins in it.

Urtemis got up. She walked about, not far, for this side room was small. The lamps cast a rich, hot light and beyond the windows the sky was black.

"He's so often with her — I've never known him so often to go with any of them. A week, a month. Then he tires." She thought proudly, it had been a year before he tired of her. But then, he had been bound to her and must make the best of it.

The wisewoman crouched under the lampstand, one blot of dark night that had got in.

"Phebo has a particular trick I've heard of. Very strange. Perverse, against the gods, perhaps sacrilegious."

"Tell me!"

"You said you didn't want —"

Urtemis raised her hands to her face. Both her wrists were clasped by gold and suddenly the bracelets were her shackles, but to what? "Don't," she said, "speak aloud. *Whisper it.*"

The woman whispered, and Urtemis turned to her with her eyes

widening — surely she had not heard aright?

"But — she does *this*?"

"She does."

"Why would he — Karestes —"

"Sometimes," said the wisewoman, "as a man ages ... and he has no son to remind him of youth and the immortality of his name."

L

UKON SPOKE SOFTLY.

"Remember, soon I race again. But it wasn't here I first saw her. No, I was in another town. I was sixteen. I'd been racing for a year, and won quite frequently. You know how they make a fuss of you. I was full of myself, Tilat."

She poured more wine into his cup. The lamps burned low, and caused her earrings to shine like little cool flames.

That perhaps was what had made him truly notice her, the first. Or an absence of that. For unlike the other women on the terraces of stands, she did not glitter and gleam in the afternoon sun. The town was a ramshackle one, but it had some decent buildings, and a stadium. They had been happy enough to enlist him, and his team, the copper-colored horses and the chariot with its stars of gold.

When the chariots came out, it had been then, in the very first minute. He was young, and once he had got up on the track, he would feel the power come into him, the racer's hubris — dangerous perhaps, but until then a wonder, and fortunate. So he turned about, seeing how the crowd received him, and what women were there, behind their often flimsy veils. There were several pretty ones, all grouped together in the women's stand. But then, his eye still traveling, he saw another woman, standing where she ought not to be, among the men. She was so different from them, the curves of her body, like the amphora. And her black clothing, swathing her, and covering almost all of her face. She was not so far off that day, toward the middle, and he thought she was some loose woman, smuggled in for an indecorous joke, in this lax, ignorant, unimportant town. He could just make out the marking of her eyes and brows on the pale bar of her upper face. Her lack of ornament. That was all. Then, he lost interest.

The race started. Most of them were clods, but there were a couple of men from the sophisticated west, and they were not so bad. The first lap came and went with a pair of spills for the local frowers, and the second lap, and then he was pulling into the third, with the best of the charioteers, the one who claimed to have come from Corinth, though perhaps he had not, over to the left, driving Lukon in and in, to squeeze him up against the stadium's central hub, and so cut him out.

Lukon knew the trick, and let it seem he would be stubborn, try to ram a path through, and so get jostled. Once the horses lost their step that way, it could be hard to get them back together again, and in this five-lap race, there was no time to be wasted. He meant in fact to let the Corinthian through. The man's pace was still uneven, the horses not well-matched, and the Corinth chariot rather on the heavy side. Lukon thought it would be easy enough to fall back and catch up again, trying next the other trick of driving straight across the mouths of the Corinthian team, which in turn would jostle them and put them out of stride.

As Lukon flicked up his whip in the air, as if to urge his copper horses on, he called low to them the words that would hold them steady, and he pulled down on the corded reins. They knew this double signal, and which part of it to obey, and although they flinched at the note of the whip, ignored it, and began to drop back. The Corinthian seemed to guess before he could see it, what Lukon



was at, and a leer of anger chased up his face. But in that moment, a cloud went over the sun.

It was an expression of the chariots, that about the cloud. A swoop of sudden darkness, when the laurel had seemed to be just before you, and all at once Sunny Apollo turned his face away, and shadow fell.

But to Lukon the shadow was actual. It spilled across his way, unseen — yet definite as octopus ink in water. The horses felt it too, they swerved at nothing — and at this second the chariot and team of one of the local fools came head-long against Lukon's flank.

He learned later from a review of the straight, that night torch-lit by a grumbling slave, what must have happened. Scraps from a previous wreck had rolled about on the ground. One of these, some cog or piece of metal, unnoticed, had caught the right-hand wheel. The chariot had slewed a very little, but, concentrating on the other matter of misleading the Corinthian, Lukon had not been aware of it. His car had accordingly tipped some inches from his control, and so the tumbling idiot behind, too stupid to go wide, ran into him, and caught him a thick, disabling blow.

At once Lukon's vehicle was slung sideways. And as the team, running slower but too fast, dragged everything out of joint, the yoke-pole cracked.

Lukon saw it all, the way the drunk beholds the earth rush suddenly up at him. He could do nothing, and next moment he was out, and down in the stadium sand. A tempest of hoofs and wheels burst by, and that was some other, marvelous fool, who had saved Lukon's life by clumsily riding clear. But the chariot was buffeted a second time, caved in, and all the gold stars fell off like omens.

The horses lived and were whole but, as could sometimes happen, were useless after. They had not been in the game long enough to forget one horrible fright. He sold them to a farm in the hills for stud at quite a reasonable price.

It was two days following that when he recalled the woman in black veils who had stood above him, where she should not be. He went back — why? why ask why? — and inquired of the stewards, who told him harshly (one had had a bet on him and so lost money) that all women kept to the women's place, and were not allowed in any other, did he suppose this some town of barbarians?

Later again, a month or more elsewhere, he had commented upon seeing a woman once among the terraces where she should not be, clothed in black. The old groom he spoke to made the sign against something maleficent.

"What is it?"

"Nothing, master, nothing."

"Tell me."

The old man pointed. Across the street from the stables was a little shrine dedicated to Kore Persephone. The small, crudely carved and painted statue showed her as she sometimes appeared during the Mysteries. The Priestess of the Lands Below, the consort of Hades, Queen Death. She held her significant pomegranate in her hand. She was curved, and swathed, and only her eyes showed, looking right at him across the street, the shade of black onyx.

"But — did you see her again?" asked Tilat, now, in the breathless, wondering voice women had, so Lukon thought, when they were afraid, and yet admiring.

"I said I did. Yes, I saw her seven months after, and miles away from both those spots. That time, someone had played with my wheel. It came off and rolled. Somehow I reached the barrier, and lived. She had been farther off, that time, right to the back — it was sheer chance I saw her. Maybe. But a year on from that day, I saw her much closer. She *was* in among the women's benches then. About four or five rows up. I could see the lights in her eyes, and some of her long hair had dripped under the edge of her veil — yellow hair, like the hair you see on the statues of Kore the Maiden. She made — the strangest movement. Rather like the way a woman will move her dress, in private, to bare her breast for her child. And I knew if I saw her breast — But she didn't do it. And she wasn't quite at the front, not quite. One of my horses, it can happen, I'd heard of it — his heart rose and choked him. He dropped dead. The others fell and I was thrown out, right across their bodies, so I saw them

dying, and then — do you see my hand? Look, this finger. Yes, Tilat, another chariot took most of it away. But another instant, it would have been my legs, both of them. I rolled so fast my skin tore open all down my back. You know the scar."

Tilat covered her face with her hands.

He heard her weeping.

"I understand, when she's finally there, against the barrier. Or if she shows me her femaleness — *then*. To see her hair almost killed me. She's death."

"Did you — today —?"

"No. Today, she wasn't there. Not at all. And every time, for the past seven times, I've seen her. Now on the upper farthest benches. Then with the boys, and none of *them* seeing her, though she was right in among them. And another day, in among the men. And next, with the women too, but eight benches up. I *counted*. And every time, Tilat, some mishap. A little one, or a bit worse. Bull cast a shoe the last occasion. We ran with it anyway — and *won*. He is a hero, Bull. But *she* — she's Death. Mine."

**I**N THE HOUR THAT FOLLOWED MIDNIGHT, after the slave had turned the vessel of sand in Tilat's day-clock, the porter let in a man at the gate through which, a few minutes ago, Lukon the charioteer had gone away.

Very dark, the newcomer emerged from the night only slowly, and as he entered Tilat's sleeping room, the lamps could make him merely into the most somber bronze, all but his red hair, which in his own land years before, had caused women to sign themselves against evil, and boys to throw stones. That was all behind him, now. As Tilat ran to him, he offered her the cheek to kiss that fascinated her the most, the cheek with the white scar like a sickle moon, and then the left side of his hard bronze breast.

Then he handed to her, without a word, a jewelry garland for her hair, gold leaves and grapes of amethyst. She liked best to be given a gift, not money.

Then he kissed her until her limbs gave way and she hung in his arms. She could not even speak his name after that — Shaizek, red-haired as Set the demon god of Egypt, the Betrayer and Enemy.

But when he had lain down with her, and all the house had heard her voice, springing like a water or a blood of sound from her convulsing body, then she too told her secret, which was not really hers, to the one she loved the best.

A BRACE OF DAYS HAD PASSED, AND URTEMIS'S HUSBAND, KARESTES, was going hunting with some of his friends, a gentleman's pastime.

She stood watching him as he selected his spears, and then he turned and looked at her, smiling.

"What a woeful face, Urtemis. What is it?"

"I shall — miss your presence in the house."

"Nonsense. Come, cheer up. You'll make me think you've had some premonition of distress."

Urtemis lifted the corners of her unknissed mouth. She constructed a smile raising the stones of it against the sinking counterweight of her heart. He did not like to see long faces. Had he not always told her so? The sadder he made her by his neglect the more he would wish to neglect her.

After he had ridden off with his slave and his dogs, Urtemis went to her chamber. Iris was sitting at the loom in the corner, busy, her earrings winking, her hands flying.

"It must be done. I've decided. I can't rest."

Iris glanced up. Her hands fell to her lap and her wide eyes grew



anxious. Even her earrings ceased to twinkle. She had been Urtemis's personal attendant since childhood, and was five years younger than her mistress. She loved — or believed she loved — Urtemis, who had always been gentle, and besides, a slave, the fate of the girl named for the rainbow, was inexorably bound to that of the woman who owned her. If Urtemis's feet came on flinty ground, so did the tender feet of Iris.

"Lady, it's not right for you to go there."

"Of course. Of course it isn't. But I must see her, I must talk to her. I must *know*."

"She — may refuse," stammered Iris.

Urtemis lost for an instant her appearance of despair and wilting. She stood straight and her eyes burned. "She won't dare."

The next hour was spent on their method of disguise. Urtemis, unpracticed, must be guided by Iris on the mode of the lower streets, and must select from the washed garments Iris had gained for them. All jewelry was removed, replaced, where thought needful, by coarser stuff. They crept out when the noon meal was to be served, by a side entrance, if seen taken, so Urtemis trusted, for women who had visited the kitchen. Although, naturally, the few who spied them know precisely what went on, as slaves had to know everything in good houses, and so grasped their lady went to call on the low whore of her tasteless husband, a thing that shamed the house further, shamed all of them, by proxy. For as they said, poison carelessly dropped from the table, makes sick the roaches on the floor.

**T**HE ROOMS OF THE HARLOT PHEBO lay behind the market, reached through a large and raucous courtyard, where types of trade went on not usual in the upper streets: knives glinted, dice were thrown, betting on the arrival of ships, and on the races that evening, mongrels and naked children ran about, and two scarlet parrots screeched ceaselessly. A narrow passage led from the yard directly to a slab of wall. Here a door was opened by an elderly, thin, dwarfish woman only the height of a child herself. But in one nostril there was a stud of gold.

"What do you want? You've no business with her."

"If I pay what she asks," said Urtemis through her veil.

The old dwarf cackled. You could see in her youth she had been very beautiful. She was the tutor of Phebo, who had learned such a lot.

"I'm supposed to argue, lady, and say, 'How can a poor woman like you afford the pleasures of Lesbos with my girl?' But it's plain enough, despite your rags, what you are."

Urtemis said, "I want only to talk to her."

"I'll go and ask," said the woman. She went through the dark and grimy space and behind a curtain.

Urtemis and Iris soon heard, dismayed, two female voices projected in cruel and feral laughter.

Then the dwarf came out and beckoned Urtemis through, only staying Iris. "You must wait with me. My, and if you were a free woman, my girl, I could make your fortune, with a little teaching."

Iris scowled, but behind her hyacinthine eyes, something stirred, for a moment.

Urtemis, oblivious, went by the curtain, and so into a roughly plastered chamber that had a painting of flowers and oranges and mating animals on the walls. Beyond a washstand with its bowl, and a bed of cushions, there was little else. Phebo stood idly by a tiny barred window that displayed the crook of the building, and a slice of sky.

Phebo was not, after all, so young. In her twenties, probably, and

across her paint, time showed itself a touch. Nor was she especially comely, while her breasts sagged in her loose dress. Had she borne a child? Perhaps she had. Her hair glowed as yellow as a paste of saffron and urine could get it.

She was common, surely cheap. And yet, her demeanor was haughty, not perhaps in the way of arrogance, this temporary ascendancy over a higher-class woman. It seemed more habitual. But then, in her own walk of life, Phebo had been, and was, a success.

"What do you want? I don't generally assist women."

"My husband is — your customer."

"Oh? Is he so? Have I somehow impaired him?"

"Yes," said Urtemis with a low hoarse passion, "since he prefers you."

"Don't fret," said Phebo lightly. "They all return to their wives. Men of his age — I assume he isn't young — tend to boys, or those desires I can gratify. This is the last flush of their stronger lusts. Then they go home and want their lawful women."

"What do you do for him?" asked Urtemis, her face in the veil scorched with blood.

"Who is he?"

"Karestes."

Phebo smiled. "Ah yes. He's a handsome one. I can understand your grievance." Urtemis stood swallowing back her fury and pain like hemlock, until she grew frozen and numb. The harlot let her do this, then she said, "It's a particular thing he likes. I have others who like it, this thing. I have a reputation for it, and so he heard of me, and sought me out. He wouldn't ask it of *you*."

"What?" croaked Urtemis. "Tell me —"

"But surely," said Phebo, "someone has *already* told you? Some helper you have."

"I didn't believe her —"

"Believe her," said Phebo. "Or, do you want to see? My friend outside keeps all the clothes ready in the chest. If you care to pay, I'll give you a performance. Would you like that?"

Urtemis dropped her veil. She stood like a white and trembling pillar. "Don't show me, show me how to do it myself. Dress me as you dress yourself, to please him."

Phebo uttered an oath and, slipping up, excused herself to the higher-class woman. Then she composed her face and said, solemnly, "The Brightest god tells us to look into ourselves and know what we are. For a man, what he fears must be faced and overcome. This is the root of it, this thing he — and others — like. To treat with his fear, and then to *possess* it. To — I won't use the word. You know what I'm saying to you."

Urtemis bowed her head. Karestes, with the skein of gray in his hair, Karestes boldly hunting boar, Karestes the athlete who was now a little stiff in one leg. His father had died at the age of forty, and now Karestes was thirty-seven.

"I'll pay double your usual fee," said Urtemis.

"I have a better plan," said Phebo, and suddenly Urtemis saw how guarded her dark eyes had become, stupid, cunning, and cold. *What will she want?*

"What will you want?" said Urtemis.

"It's simple. Someone is coming in the afternoon, a new client. He desires the very thing Karestes does. You want to see, don't you, if you're any good at it, if you can delight your man as I have? Oh, don't look so upset, lady, *this* one today doesn't want much else. He's shy. His slave called to say what he will have. A caress or two, I'll show you how. Nothing properly to besmirch your honor. And then, you can be sure of yourself."

Urtemis stared. This was the woman's revenge. Doubtless she would give nothing unless she could exact it. Rage, humiliation, pure caution fought with desperation in Urtemis's heart and brain. And, as almost always, desperation triumphed over all.

WHEN THE NEW CUSTOMER APPROACHED PHEBO'S HOUSE, HE DID SO alone. He was huddled in a musty cloak, a fold of it pulled up over his head and much of his upper face. Nevertheless, he moved strongly, his legs were muscular, and his shoulders wide, even



though it seemed he tried to bow them over. His jaw too was that of a young man, dark of skin, and one time, when four urchins had bothered him near the fish market, he had sent two spinning with a negligent slap. There was a knife in his belt, just visible.

When he reached the doorway, which was where he had been told it would be, he saw three women standing about there. One was plainly a prostitute, and he took her for Phebo though she was dressed in yellow. The second of the women was old and malformed, and the third young, but very alarmed, wriggling, and muzzled up to the eyes in a shoddy but decent veil. An apprentice, possibly.

"Oh, are *you* he?" said the woman he had supposed was Phebo. "You look a fine virile master. I'm sorry now it isn't to be me. Do you really only want what your man asked for?"

"Perhaps not," said the arrival. "But my business isn't with you, apparently. Is she inside?" He had the accent of a foreigner, and the yellow whore shrugged as if to say, if he were not a man of her own lovely race, she was less regretful at not serving him. She indicated the door, and so he went in, and next through a curtain that had been pulled open. He sensed as he did so the youngest nervous one make some gesture toward him, but the others stopped her. He was not concerned at that.

Now, anyway, he saw before him the woman who must truly be Phebo, for she was garbed as he had been assured Phebo would garb herself, for the proper price. What surprised him was that she did not, despite her garb, look at all as if she were in the trade she evidently was. No, she looked like a chaste woman of some noble house, and her skin, where he saw it, on her arms and forehead, was like cream. A pang of desire surged through him after all, but he put that off. He might try her after, when the other thing he wanted most was seen to. For his scheme, anyway, this unanticipated fineness in her was all to the good.

"Your sisters were outside. I'd send them off, but they seem to have departed. I want to share a secret with you."

The woman stood up. Her veil fluttered down. He saw she was quite beautiful, remarkably so, and her hair, that coiled free over one breast, was the color of summer corn. Despite this, she was frightened, unmistakably. Far worse than the girl had been outside.

He turned back and armed shut the curtain that divided off the rooms. The alley beyond the door was indeed empty.

"Very well, you know who I am. I was too modest thinking you wouldn't." He too pushed off his covering, to reveal the architectural body and russet hair of Red Shaizek, the charioteer.

This exquisite Phebo shook her head dumbly.

Shaizek laughed. "Don't dissemble. I won't hurt you. It's another I've got in mind for that. The bastard has beaten me all of five times, but last time was the last time."

Phebo spoke. Her accent was educated but, still confused by the plethora of dialects and other vocal flutes in foreign places, Shaizek did not really notice. "I think you require something I can't give. You see — there has been a mistake, a trick. My fault. You must pardon me —"

"Shut up." He ordered this quite amiably. "You'll do as you're told. You may have a quaint face, but I can still beat it to a pulp. That would be a problem, I think. So, you'll do what I say. I'll pay you lavishly. Much more than the slave promised. And you won't even have to indulge in your usual work ... unless you want to." Phebo stood before him, and he saw her quivering like a graceful slender tree. He folded his arms. "It's well done," he said. "I'll give you that. It must be, if your clients like it as much as I've heard. But *he* won't like it, by my own Sutekh, no. Lift your veil again, up over your mouth, nose. Like that. Yes."

Urtemis stood before Shaizek, not knowing him at all, for she had never seen a chariot race in her life. All she did know was that she had made out the two women running away along the alley laughing, taking Iris with them unwilling or eager — and leaving Urtemis helpless here, with this dangerous brute, a man. And what he seemed to want, although she did not yet know what it was to be, she somehow sensed was worse than any sexual act he might have

demand. But she could not tell him the truth of her situation, for the sake of Karestes's honor. In any case, Urtemis had realized that, trained from her birth to the utter obedience of female to male, she could no more resist this terrible masculine will than fight him physically. She must do all, and everything. Probably the gods, wishing to destroy her, had made her mad. How else had she come to this? With a stab of sheer pain, that might have been anger, in another, she gave herself over.

Shaizek, however, was happy. For just as he had formerly heard, Phebo clad herself for her more perverse clients in the exact likeness of the Death-Persephone of the Mysteries, swathed in black, white faced, her eyes ringed round, her yellow hair falling free, and if he had not known these gods were nothing to the true gods of his homeland, seeing her as he found her, with this aura of fineness, of fear and fate and shadow, and, worse, of awful purity, he too might have been, one second, afraid.

"DRINK," SAID THE DWARF WOMAN TO IRIS IN THE HOT LITTLE neighboring cell, "it's sweet, isn't it? Yes, what you'd like. And you could have this every hour. And jewels. You should see the trinkets my Phebo has. When I was a little past my best, I trained her up. And now she's a little blown, like the pretty roses, she'll train you, she and I. So, you're a slave. There are ways around that. And do you think, anyway, your mistress will ever allow them to pursue you, after what you know she's been up to this afternoon?"

**B**ENEATH THE WRITING ON THE TAVERN wall — *Xetis it is who loves me* — the expected wit had scrawled: *Best seek a physician then.*

You did not go drinking before the race. Lukon had never done so, knew not to do so. Yet he had come in here, and asked for a scoop of water, like a beggar off the street. They gave it him gladly, clapped him on the back. They thought he was showing himself to his patrons, who cheered him loudly. But he was saying farewell.

He had not known what to do about the horses, but in the end he had accepted their destiny was tied with his, as the reins would be tied about him today. He made an offering at the temple of Poseidon, who had a special fondness for the swift horses of sea ports.

Once Lukon paused. *I must not think after this fashion.* But it was on him like a fever, slight, pervasive, unmistakable. Ever since he had told the girl, which he had thought would make it less. Ever since, growing heavier and more sure with every hour. It would be now. This evening. Under the low golden sun that shot his arrows side-long down the straight, the Bright god who spoke of self-knowledge, and every night, without fear, descended into the dark.

Death. It would be death.

In the stall, he went to them, his gleaming black horses: Bull, named for his strength, and Bird for his speed, and Eros — called for love.

He always talked to them, before a race, telling them what they must do. This evening he told them nothing, only praised them. He hoped they would survive what was to come, and on their bridles hung the new amulets, the tiny silver Poseidons. They never deserved it, princely beings broken like firewood. He was sorry for the chariot, too, poor thing.

He had been conscious, about the stable court, of other racers, speaking to him, if they must, briefly. No insults, no wishes for ill or good. And one of the foreign ones, the boy from Caria, who would not even allow Lukon's shadow to pass over his own.

The Egyptian was there also, flaunting his well-groomed bays,



riding his chariot round and round, with the mask of his peculiar demon-animal on its front. The Egyptian greeted Lukon, "Smile for me, Lukon!" It was the most luckless thing you could say, and someone spat, for the smile of the stadium was pain, and ultimately the grin of the naked skull.

"Red Shaizek, outland scum," said the man from Lydia. But he did not say it to Lukon.

When it was time, they rode up, flat-faced and straight as effigies, every man, and the sun came over on them from the edge of the stadium roof, shining up the horses, and the metal, and all their eyes.

Lukon had not prayed. To whom could you pray, when this was already with you? Now, he turned his head, and looked carefully and directly, face by face, along the benches of the terraces. As if he searched for a dear friend or sworn foe.

And — he did not see her there. He did not see her, Queen Death. For she was not among the benches of the men, or the seats of the boys, or the seats for favored servants and freedmen.

Even so, as they rode forward, to the starting point, he looked on and on, face by face. His heart was beating as though he could die of it, but he would not, not of that.

And then. He found her.

She was there.

Among the women's seats in the most decorous place. Yet, as he had known, she had come to the very front, the most unabashed spot, the most advantageous and yet uncertain spot, right against the low barrier, where the wreath of laurel done in green and crimson and gold, curved only a few feet above the sanded straight. No other woman had been bold enough for that. If any saw her, they must think her one of the primest, choicest, and least wise. But no one, of course, could see her. Only Lukon.

Something made him glance across the lines of his fellow racers. Their eyes were to the front. Now the quick offering was being made, smoke, a glimpse of flame. He should look at that. But there was no use in offerings now.

He turned and stared again at her. She had never appeared so near to him — or so *real*. It seemed she had put on flesh of alabaster and hair of corn-gold. Just for him. Her eyes, above the partly raised black veil, were blacker than any veil in the world, but as he gazed, she lowered them. Death would not meet his eyes. Or no, it was not that, she meant him to see something else. Under the wing of the veil, she had opened her dress, the way a woman does in private, to suckle her child. He saw the creamy globe for one split second, just the perfection of it, the eye of the nipple that had been enameled, or *was*, like her eyes, *jet black*. Then she was covered, and through the sparkling, thickening air, the signal came.

They burst forward, all the chariots, Lukon's chariot with the rest. They were galloping before he had time to know how it had come about, and he thought that he should have taken note of what he did, it was the last time he would ever do it.

Swept up, he beheld the turn, the golden, sun-fired dust, the Carian boy out ahead, and two others curving in behind, and then himself, caught between the Lydian and Red Shaizek.

Lukon heard Shaizek singing some chant to his animal gods.

But they had squealed around the turn — another episode gone forever. They dashed up the opposing straight, and the sun ran over them, over and down, and threw its flame before them now, but between lay the moving hedge of their own shadows, like a black pit into which each must fall, but it would be only Lukon who must fall.

He raised his head and glared into the sky. He would never see it again. In the land of the shades, there was no sky. His eyes seemed to shatter with tears, and so, blind, he took the second turn, and the Lydian had thumped his flank, and the horses seemed a moment all scrambled together, but then free, and he did not, could not, care any more, for *she* was ahead of him again, there on his left hand. And it would be now.

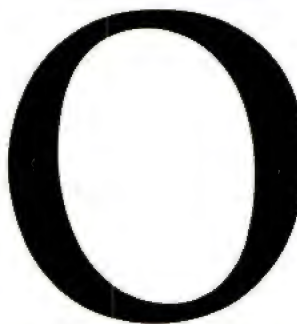
He felt all control go from him, and then the chariot went from him, but he was carried with it.

The horses, bellowing, thrashing and out of rhythm, rushing as if

downhill, clear of everything, and the world cast away, but the barrier, the terrible pigsty barrier, with its badly decorated laurel wreaths, looming up as if it were a mountain, that thing which was only a few feet high and half a foot thick —

Lukon screamed. The horses were screaming. He felt nothing, only a sort of whiteness splintered with shards of orange and red.

The chariot buckled. He sprang as if winged, lurched out and down and the reins snapped off from him, burning him nearly in half. He crashed forward into the abyss of endless Night.



ON THE EDGE OF THE PATH that leads to the shadows, Urtemis lay, looking up at the fading sky. Hades, King Death, who had ridden to her out of the sun, his black chariot fuming and coal-black horses breathing fire, sweep-

ing her up, crushing her down, now covered her body with his.

She felt only her utter shame. That she had done what she had been told to, baring herself — even that — and everything was lost as it had been from the moment she gave herself to her madness, and she must die now, because her honor was riven from her, and so she had forfeited eternally the love of Karestes, her husband.

Thus, she did not watch how, as Shaizek was winning the race, men were lifting the charioteer from Urtemis's dead body. Her spine had been broken by the impact of the chariot and team, as they clove the barrier, and her head had one little cut at the temple, which nevertheless had veiled her face in blood. No one knew who she was.

Nearby, the horses, standing mysteriously and miraculously unharmed among the smashed benches, were shivering as if it were their first race. Yet Bull, the valiant and loyal one, hearing Lukon's voice go on screaming, turned his head, and tried to understand, before grooms led them all away.

YOU MAY SEE HIM YET ABOUT THE PORT, LUKON THE ONE-LEGGED. He lives on the charity of the town, and they are kindly to him. He tells a story, if you would hear, of how he met and killed Death in the stadium. But naturally it was only some accident and some whore who died — despite that different tale, which anyway, was hushed up. Lukon's horses were sold to a young charioteer from Caria, who races them now in the East. That is, if they are not already too old for it, and have become instead the fathers of other racers. Urtemis's tomb you will not find, search as you wish. But there was a girl called Tilat, who hanged herself when Red Shaizek left her, and she had bought a tomb, so you may go and look at that.

For Shaizek the Egyptian, he wins, he always wins, and they say he always will win. But one day too, he will also die, as all men do.

Death loves me.

For however much I keep myself from death,

However often I misremember death,

Death will stay for me,

Always faithful.

Until at last

I will leave everything,

Honor, riches, love, fame, all —

Only to be one with death.

*Anonymous Greek from a wall at Thrace.  
Probably 3rd Century BC.* ♣







*When passion's fever rises, you must seek a remedy or die.*

# REMEDY OF THE BANE

BY STORM CONSTANTINE

*Illustration by Carol Heyer*

THE IMMENSITY OF THE CITY UNNERVED HIM AT FIRST; the height of its walls that contained as much as excluded. Once within their protecting stones, he felt swallowed: The training barracks beyond the city, with their ranks of guards, manifold rules, and restrictions, seemed less enfolding.

His name was Orlando Pepper. He was a young man, from a good family, and very handsome. He was also a new soldier, meticulously trained, and because of his father's connections, if not his own good conduct, had secured a position in the palace guard in the city of Kadrid. His leather gleamed, his dark eyes shone with

optimism, his devotion to his king was keen and passionate. It was an honor to be assigned to the palace guard, even though his function would be essentially decorative, and bar unforeseen invasion — which was of course unlikely — lacking action of any kind.

In the royal barracks, Orlando Pepper was given a new uniform with tassels and an ornate sword. On active duty — that is, standing on guard at various stations around the palace and its environs, or parading up and down for the citizens — he wore a splendid helm adorned with horsehair dyed to indigo. He was allotted a servant to see to his polish-

ing, light his pipe, or whatever other duties he might require, and had recourse to the services of painstaking whores who lived in a house, which was painted red, but discreetly positioned behind the royal barracks, and shielded by tall, conical trees.

Orlando felt as if his circumstances could not be improved in any way. His demands from life were modest. He wrote letters to his mother in the country, describing the disturbing opulence and bulk of the city, Kadrid. He sent his sisters trinkets bought from the markets, amulets impressed with the image of the king; the silent queen; or their daughters,



Seramis, Thirza, and Phedra. "One day," Orlando wrote to his mother, "the Princess Seramis will be queen, and I hope to serve her, for she is a woman of great beauty and kindness."

Seramis, gifted eldest daughter. Gentle, popular, white of skin, with a mane of glorious black hair, her eyes dark as shadows but with a warmth within. The people loved Seramis. Whenever she inspected the guard, she would smile softly and incline her head. They, of course, could make no response, but she left flowers for them; small, compact roses of aching scent, which they could pick up from the ground when they went off duty, and take to place beneath their pillows. One day, she would become a legendary queen.

Thirza, the youngest daughter, was still a child; boisterous and plump. She rode her ponies in the palace gardens, with her own guard, for all of whom she had invented pet names. She gave them gifts: pictures she had drawn, or little models she had made of clay and straw. She chattered gaily to them as they rode, bringing light and happiness to their hearts. Thirza too was loved.

Then the middle daughter, Phedra. She was beautiful, as her mother was beautiful. Pale yellow hair like a bolt of unraveled silk, slim as a reed, with slanting cat's eyes, unusually dark for her coloring. But where Seramis had a sweetly scented blossom beneath her tongue, and Thirza a bubbling, aromatic stream, Phedra had a blade of ice. Her voice was low-pitched but deadly. When the royal family gathered for some public occasion or another, and Seramis touched brows with cool fingers and uttered soft words of hope and inspiration, and Thirza bounced around making people ache with delighted laughter, Phedra stood back, tapping her toes, yawning, turning away from earnest faces. The king would flick admonishing glances at her, the queen might scowl very slightly in disappointment, and later, in the royal apartments, sharp words might be exchanged on the subject, but Phedra seemed immune to criticism. Many rumors were circulated in the city concerning other aspects of Phedra's behavior, which were deemed unsuitable for a princess. She went through ladies-in-waiting faster than they could be dragooned into her service. It was said her venom occasionally manifested in more physical outbursts, and ladies had been sighted fleeing from Phedra's apartments, tears on their faces, the red flowers of sharp slaps upon their cheeks. It was also suggested that Princess Phedra had rather too eager a taste for wine, which only served to exacerbate her temper. Someone had fallen downstairs once, broken a bone. Perhaps an accident.

Orlando Pepper heard these rumors, but his superior officers advised all the soldiers to ignore such gossip, and warned them not to repeat anything that they might hear. Orlando agreed fervently with this directive. The royal family, in his opinion, was above reproach.

Therefore he closed his ears, and even offered a short rebuke, to the colleague who whispered to him about how the Princess Phedra had taken to spending most evenings away from the palace. Of course, there was nothing unusual in this. Princess Seramis also made many excursions into the city at night, accompanied by her personal guard, her retinue of ladies, and her bevy of castrated pages. She would always return before midnight, pausing only to scatter flowers at the guards on duty before the main doors of the palace, after she had alighted from her carriage. Princess Phedra, however, rarely returned before dawn, and often she had managed to shake off the attentions of her personal guard, her ladies, and pages. One of the guards had reported that Phedra had come stumbling up the main driveway alone, only two nights previous, so drunk she could barely stand, with her boots in her hand and her fur wrap lost. She had even paused to utter lewd remarks at the guard and, horror of horrors (although perhaps this was an exaggeration), had lifted her skirts to display her underwear. "At least she was wearing some," said the informant gleefully, "otherwise the poor man's eyes might have had to be put out! Such a sight is not for commoners, after all!"

"I don't believe any of it," said Orlando, loyally, with a stern glance at his colleague.

"It is absolutely true," said the informant, who then shrugged. "Who cares? The woman's an evil bitch. If you don't believe that lit-

tle snippet, you certainly wouldn't believe other tales I could tell you, of incidents that have occurred involving members of the palace staff."

"I don't want to hear them," Orlando said, stiffly. And he didn't.

**T**HE TIME CAME FOR ORLANDO PEPPER'S first night on sentry duty outside the palace. He was not stationed at the grand main portico with others, but at a lone sentinel's post behind the main building, where the lawns yawned downward in moonlight. Unseen by human eyes, Orlando stood to attention, frowning sightlessly at the garden, but his senses alert for untoward noises that might advertise intrusion. Twice a night, once after midnight, once before dawn, two senior officers patrolled the gardens to inspect the sentries. As the Witch Star fell in the sky, Orlando heard the crunch of booted feet along the gravel pathway, the murmur of the officers conferring softly in the moonlight. Orlando's spine stiffened, his lower lip stuck out, his breast bone also. The officers flicked him a glance, said nothing, strolled on. Orlando heard laughter over some private joke or another. He felt they had not really seen him, nor appreciated his meticulous attention to his duties. Still, he was aware of his own devoutness, and that was enough.

The night poured on. The moon sank dreamily into the arms of the tallest trees.

How beautiful were the gardens as the white ghost-light faded; the heavy drooping branches; the night-scented flowers hanging over the great stone vases; the fountains that glinted distantly between the tangled boughs of ancient trees. Peacocks called, as they dragged their folded tails through the wet grass; nervous foxes ran across the lawns. From some far window came a thread of music, quickly silenced. Orlando felt the dew fall upon his face, but he did not move. A moth alighted on his cheek. He did not move.

There was laughter in the distance; a female sound. She came into view around a corner of the palace. Gargoyles and the death-masks of martyred virgins looked down through stone eyes, their expressions weirdly censorious, even outraged. Her hair hung around her shoulders, darker because it was not entirely dry. She looked, in fact, drowned. She was not alone, but accompanied by a whinnying young man who was having as much trouble controlling his feet as she. They stumbled, leaning on one another, giggles smothered by fingers and a pantomimed "Sssh!" Then she saw Orlando.

Orlando had recognized the Princess Phedra immediately, even if her hair was in disarray. It was clear that she was drunk. He stood to attention sternly, his eyes focused straight ahead, down across the lawns. In some perverse fashion, he was glad to witness the truth of the rumors, because it meant he could seal his lips for her sake, for the sake of her father and royal honor.

Phedra eyed the soldier. For a moment, she stood swaying on the gravel. Then she sashayed wantonly across the space between them. "Soldier," she said, "look at me." Her hands defined the lithe contours of her body in its sheathe of dark silk. She shook her hair and tendrils of it clung to her damp face.

Orlando knew he must make no response. As a sentry, he had no other choice.

Phedra leaned close. He could smell her breath, smoky and sweetly rotten with too much liquor. She was a blurred shadow before him, while the lawns stretched away in sharp focus. "Soldier, I gave you an order! Look at me!"

Orlando's face began to burn. He was torn. Should he obey the princess and desert his duty? Did the royal word come before the offices of sentinel? No, he knew his obligation. He had learned that a sentry must not flinch, alert only for danger to the palace, no matter what other distractions arose.

Phedra laughed. She reached up with a hot, moist hand and stroked the soldier's cheek. "You're just a boy," she murmured.



# *After he had knelt in the dust to suffer the blinding, scalding pain of his punishment, two of his friends helped him to his feet.*

"Come now, look at me. I demand it." Then she stood on tiptoe and put her lips against his.

Orlando pulled away. "Your Highness, I beg you!" he exclaimed.

"Oh!" said Phedra. "Well, well, well! Am I not good enough for you? Are the whores they give you more beautiful than I, is that it?"

"No," Orlando said miserably. "Forgive me, Your Highness."

Phedra pulled a sour face. Her companion still stood swaying behind her, offering encouragement. "Grab his balls, Pheddy!"

Phedra turned away. "There is only one set of balls I'm grabbing tonight, Taristo! Come along!" She walked unsteadily away along the path, in the direction of a back entrance to the palace, and with a final sneer at Orlando, her companion followed her.

Orlando was left dazed, feeling as if he'd suffered some ghastly hallucination. Still, his lips were sealed, his eyes were blind. As his heart slowed down, and his brain denied what had happened, he gazed once more upon the spreading lawns, and the night continued.

At dawn, he went off duty and returned to his room in the barracks to sleep. After a scant two hours' slumber, his door was thrown open and three men marched into the room, one of them a senior officer of the guard. "Out of bed and on with your trousers," he said.

Orlando was confused, but obeyed. He had been trained to obey. He asked what was wrong, but the men would not tell him. They dragged him out into a yard beyond the kitchens, where he was surprised to discover most of his colleagues were gathered. None of them, he noticed, looked very happy. All were in full uniform, while Orlando wore only his trousers.

The officer produced a paper and read from it. Orlando was so shocked by what he heard he felt he might faint, and that would be a terrible thing for a soldier to do. Princess Phedra had reported him for neglecting his duties. He had spoken to her, she said. He had broken his silence.

Orlando tried to utter an anguished explanation, but his words were ignored. He was told to be silent. His sentence, for his misdemeanor, was six strokes of the lash.

After he had knelt in the dust to suffer the blinding, scalding pain of his punishment, two of his friends helped him to his feet. "You are not the first," one of them said, but that was all.

It was a test, Orlando thought. A test, and I failed it. I deserved my punishment.

He convinced himself he was grateful to the princess for underlining his weaknesses. It would not happen a second time. The incident was not mentioned by his superiors again, and if any of his friends wanted to speak with him about it, Orlando discouraged them by keeping a distance.

Among themselves, but excluding Orlando, the palace guard talked about how the Princess Phedra had taken to sentry-baiting as a new sport. The example set by Orlando, the scapegoat, encouraged them all to ignore the princess's advances. She was aware of this and tormented them cruelly. One said she had even stripped naked before him, then danced upon the lawn like a harlot. Perhaps some wild elaboration entered their tales.

Orlando was on night sentry duty again a couple of months later. If there was any trepidation in his breast as he exchanged with the soldier on duty before him, he kept it hidden, even from himself. The summer was turning and the garden seemed too ripe, too heavy. Heat hung above the royal lawns, and the peacocks drowsed beneath the spreading cedars. Orlando was hot in his uniform, and

sweat ran down from beneath his helm. This time, he was stationed at a point where two other sentries were visible to his left and right. In that, he might have felt safer.

Still, she came. Alone, this time, and her hair pinned up. She did not seem quite so drunk, but called out a bright "hello" to the first soldier she passed. His apparent ignorance of her presence did not appear to offend her. Then, she saw Orlando.

"Why, it's you!" she cried, and then laughed.

It was hell in its truest form for Orlando as he suffered the predations of the Princess Phedra. She goaded him, she kissed him, she pawed his face, fondled him through his clothes, whispered lewd promises. He felt as if his soul might break, as if he might die, as the heat pressed down like a fist from the pulsing dark sky and the woman writhed like a succubus around him. He found himself thinking that she was mad, and perhaps to be pitied, and this thought strengthened him. Then an unexpected stab of anger passed through him, hotter than the night. He wanted to push her away, spit on her, tell her she did not deserve the title of princess. She dishonored the ancient noble house of her ancestors. But all this took place only in his mind. Eventually, Princess Phedra tired of her sport. She sighed, and for an instant, leaned against the soldier, feeling for that moment like a sad, lost creature, without weight or substance. Then, she retreated. "You must join my prissy sister's retinue of lovely catamites," she said, "for clearly you have no interest in women." She called to the sentry standing rigidly to attention some yards away. "Take him indoors and see to him, soldier. It's what he wants, I'll wager." Then she hiccuped and walked away along the path, disappearing around the corner that led to the place where she had first accosted Orlando. Silence descended, and the soldiers did not look at one another, not once, throughout the long, hot reaches of the night.

In the dawn, when the change came, Orlando's confederates of the night came to offer support, a hand upon the shoulder, quiet words. Orlando shrugged them off. He felt numb yet invigorated. He went straight to his superior officer. The man listened in silence as Orlando related what had happened in the night.

"I would not have come to you and told you these things if there was any other way," Orlando said with dignity, standing straight. "But we cannot endure this treatment for much longer. It is inhuman."

"Do you suppose I'm unaware of what happens around here?" drawled the officer.

Orlando shook his head. "No sir."

"And will you be the one to go to the king and report what is happening?"

Orlando stuttered. "It is ... it is not my place, sir."

"No," replied the officer, dryly. "In fact, it is not anyone's place. The king would order you hanged for treason. The royal daughters are beyond reproach, you must know this. They are inviolate, and their ways are not to be questioned. That is an end to the matter."

"But ..." began Orlando.

"It is to be hoped Her Highness will presently tire of her little games," interrupted the officer. "The best way to deal with it is to ignore it."

"Yes sir."

"And if you mention this matter again to me, I will have you flogged."

"Yes sir."



# *Orlando had never seen inside it, although, one of his sisters told him Granny kept the mummified corpse of a former lover inside it.*

"As far as you're concerned, it did not happen."

"Yes sir." But Orlando knew that it had. His faith in his duty had been shaken. He no longer felt loyal, only abused.

AS THE LEAVES UPON THE CEDARS TURNED TO THE BRAZEN HUES OF death in the palace garden, Orlando went home to the country on leave for a few days. Although the officers of the guard had not mentioned the antics of Princess Phedra to their men, it must have been discussed because certain precautions had been introduced. The guard now changed more frequently, so that the sentries were not obliged to endure long hours of motionless torment after surviving the attentions of the princess. She generally appeared in the garden between two or three hours before dawn. Naturally, this shift became unpopular among the guard. Certain soldiers she clearly singled out for special attention. Orlando was one of them. He rarely found himself on sentry duty after one o'clock in the morning, or before dawn thereafter. Still, it was impossible to avoid Princess Phedra completely. Often she would walk in the gardens in the afternoon, with her sister, Seramis, and her mother. If Orlando, or any of her other favorites, was on duty, she would stare at him beneath the brim of her sun hat, and smile a wide, predatory smile. Once she sauntered past him on her way into the house and said, "Why, I believe you are avoiding me, soldier!" Then she laughed. "But it won't be forever." Orlando burned with an emotion so complex he could not name it. In some ways it was flavored with a perverse desire, in others a lust to kill. Phedra was lovely in her wantonness. Her defiance of convention held its own wicked allure. She tempted, and should anyone succumb to that temptation, she betrayed. None of the guard entertained any doubts she would report them if one ever broke his silence before her again.

So, Orlando went home. His mother remarked that his letters had become infrequent over the past couple of months, and that he had lost weight. Was all well with him? Orlando, naturally, had not reported the happenings at the palace to his family. He muttered excuses; work was hard. His lips were sealed, not by loyalty to the Crown, but because he knew to speak the truth could cost him his life. Privately the situation obsessed him; he thought of it constantly. If he were Phedra's father, he would have her beaten naked before the whole guard, whether she was a princess or not. A whore who accosted guards on duty would be hanged or burned. Phedra was no better. And yet ... he thought of her in the garden, the afternoon gilding the trees, her misty smile beneath her wide hat. He thought of her low laughter, the flash of her eyes, the intelligent humor there, and something sharp twisted inside him.

He visited his grandmother, his mother's mother, in her attic room in the house, where a huge stove kept the drafts at bay. Granny's collection of arcana cluttered the walls and shelves. She was considered to be eccentric, but forgiven, for she was very old. Her eyesight and her intuition, however, were still keen.

"So, who is this woman who's breaking your heart?" she demanded when Orlando sat down on the rug before her chair.

Orlando glanced up, stunned. "No one!" he declared, but a burn came to his cheeks.

Granny flapped a disbelieving hand. "But it is written all over you, as if her claws had scratched it into your skin. Don't lie to me, Olly, my sweet. You never could lie to Granny."

Orlando stared at the carpet. "I know what you see in me, but it

is not what you think," he said. "Neither can I explain it to you."

"Try!" said the old woman.

Orlando shook his head. "No," he said. "I don't need to try. I could tell you in simple words quite easily. It's just that I am honor-bound to silence." He looked up. "My life depends on it."

Granny frowned. "And who will I tell? The wind, to spread it around the world? The birds to fly it here and there? Bah!" She laughed and threw up her hands. "Who will I tell, little Olly, who might threaten your life?"

"I would prefer to keep silent," Orlando answered. "I would feel soiled speaking of it, for it is terrible."

Granny narrowed her keen eyes. "Hmm. You are just a boy. You need help. I won't have you thinning away in your grief. You must tell me something, just a little something, so I might help you."

"I don't see how you possibly could." His head came up and fire came into his voice. "It is a torment that is clawing me to rags! It will not let me be! I cannot see how it will end! If I succumb, I am lost, but my strength is failing..." He shook his head. "It is a great evil, a spirit of evil!"

Granny narrowed her eyes and made a suggestion. "In the form of a woman?"

Orlando nodded silently. He felt his eyes grow hot, and suddenly he was weeping against his grandmother's knees. In his mind, he was thinking this was not the way a soldier should behave, certainly not a soldier of the palace guard, but he couldn't help it. Granny patted his head and hummed to herself. Orlando wondered whether he'd said too much. Granny was astute. Perhaps she'd guessed some of the meaning behind his words. Presently, she said, "Dry your tears, my lovely boy, and help me up. We have to delve in my trunk."

Granny's trunk was a vast thing, bound in iron, and off-limits to other members of the household. Orlando had never seen inside it, although, as a child, one of his sisters had told him their grandmother kept the mummified corpse of a former lover inside it. This, Orlando had believed, for Granny seemed capable of anything. She was, after all, eccentric. Now, he scorned such fancies, but he still felt breathless as she wrestled with the fastenings to the iron bands. But when the trunk was opened, it was full only of the usual items that comprised her "collection": bottles, twigs, leaves, dried mice and lizards, glass marbles, broken clocks, hanks of hair, skeins of silk, bright necklaces of glittering jewels, folded gowns rusty with age, and the like. Granny delved.

"Ah, here we are!" she declared and knelt upright on her creaking knees. She held an elegant little glass vase up to the light. It was brown and opaque, but something seemed to shine within its depths.

"What is it?" Orlando asked.

"Take it!" ordered Granny and thrust the vase into his hands. It felt warm to the skin. Presently Granny re-emerged from the depths of the trunk holding a companion vase of blue glass. This was clearly filled with liquid. "One to remedy, one to bane!" declared the grandmother. "Help me up now!" Orlando did so.

"You must take these," Granny said. "In the brown vase is a powder. This you must dust upon your lips — or indeed any other place you deem suitable! But before you do this, you must dab three drops of the liquid from the blue vase on your tongue."

"Why?" Orlando asked, nervously shaking the blue vase and looking at its contents.

"Because the powder will kill you unless you prepare yourself



against its effects with the liquid."

"A poison," murmured Orlando.

"Oh, wake up a little, Olly!" snapped Granny. "If you powder your lips with my bane-dust, whoever kisses you is dead within a week! If a she-devil harrows your shadow, then poison it."

Orlando swiftly put down the vases on his grandmother's table. "No," he said, shaking his head vehemently. "I can't do that! It's absolutely impossible." His Granny had not guessed the truth of his dilemma, then.

"Nonsense," admonished the old woman. "The poison is undetectable. I paid a great deal for it once. Its effects mimic a clench of the heart, and as I said, takes some days to work. No one will suspect you! If the recipient should also have drank a little wine, or some other liquor, before you apply the powder, all to the better."

"That would not be difficult," said Orlando, and with those words he realized he was seriously considering the idea.

He could tell no one, of course, but then he had a reputation for being reclusive among his peers. Would anyone suspect? Surely not. Who would dare to poison a princess, however cruel and wayward she might be? His life was dedicated to protecting her and her family. At this thought, he felt a twinge of self-rebuke. How could he, a man of honor, even consider stooping to murder? For murder it would be. Phedra was a high-spirited girl, who did not, could not, comprehend the effects of her conduct on the sentries. And yet, some part of him suspected Phedra knew all too well what she was doing. She was pushing the situation further all the time, pushing it as far as it would go. He felt that if nothing were done about it, someone would die because of her. No. Ridiculous. He pondered the matter all the time he was with his family. His grandmother did not mention his visit to her again, and the subject of the vases was not raised.

His mother continued to criticize his appearance and mien, and tried to improve his mood with large meals. His father simply regaled him with tales of his own days in the army, while his sisters languished for local young men, and did not really notice him.

Soon, his period of leave was over and it was time to return to the city. As he packed the night before leaving, the vases stood on the windowsill in his room. It was only as he was about to lock the case that his hands reached nervously to push them inside among his shirts.

BY THE TIME HE REACHED KADRID, AND THE REALITY OF THE CITY grew before him, in sight and in presence, Orlando had abandoned the thought of poisoning Princess Phedra. The idea seemed absurd now. He was a creature of order and correctness, and must not let his grandmother's eccentricities affect him. Then he heard the news.

While he'd been away, Phedra had reported one of the night sentries for indecent assault. "He didn't have a chance," said Orlando's informant. "She was a she-demon. Others saw it, and were powerless. He cracked. Simple as that. It had to happen eventually."

The king had ordered the assailant to be hanged. The execution had been carried out only two days before.

"They gave him the poppy at the end," Orlando was told. "They did that much for him. He died dreaming."

Orlando went numb. That could have been him kicking air, dying cruelly in the arms of Lady Morphia and the rope. Perhaps only a timely holiday had saved him, passed the death card along to some other wretch.

He went to his room alone, and locked the door. For some moments, he sat upon his bed, his hands hanging limply between his knees, his mind empty. Eventually, he roused himself and set about unpacking his case. The shirts around the vases felt warm as if they'd been hung next to a stove. He stared at the glass vessels for a short while, before gently lifting them in turn, opening their stoppers and sniffing the contents. *Kiss this bane*, he thought. *Kiss it with your sly smile, and your clever, cruel laughter. Die as he died, kicking...*

His only opportunity would be at night, but he was never on duty at the crucial hour nowadays. Then, he remembered Phedra's words, that he would not be able to avoid her forever. She, he felt, was waiting to hunt him down, and weirdly, because of that, he trusted her. It also gave him an advantage she did not suspect. The

prey, when it was driven into the open, would be stronger and fiercer than she imagined.

The following afternoon, Orlando was on sentinel duty in the gardens. Phedra spotted him the moment she walked across the upper lawn behind her mother, but waited for over an hour to launch an attack. She strolled along the gravel path, pausing at his station to gaze haughtily up at him; a beautiful, exquisite, evil thing. "I have missed you these past days," she said. Her voice was a sweet poison. "Missed your pretty face. Where have you been? Off with your lover? Is he pretty too?"

For a fraction of second, Orlando flicked his glance toward hers. It was, he hoped, an enigmatic look, yet charged with intention, so brief, the princess might believe she'd only imagined it. He knew it would not be enough for her to report him, but enough for something, *something*.

She raised her brows, but said nothing, and walked on.

Orlando was confident the challenge had been recognized. He was filled with an intense and dark excitement.

**D**EAD OF NIGHT, AND THE HARVEST moon hung low behind the barracks. Like a ghost she came along the corridor, where the long windows overlooked the parade yard. Like a ghost in her floating white linen, with her unbound harvest hair, her naiad's eyes. No one saw her moving from moonbeam to shadow, no one heard her silent

feet. But she came, nonetheless. Hunting.

Orlando had not expected such an obvious move. When the door to his room opened and he awoke to behold a slim silhouette in the pale light at the threshold, he thought one of the whores had come to him. Then she came inside, shut the door and leaned against it, gripping the handle behind her. Corn-colored hair spilled forward over her shoulders, her face was heavily shadowed, almost demonic. Orlando was not on duty now, nor bound to silence. At once, every nerve in his body became alert. He sensed her weapons, the lashing tongue, the mordant eyes, perhaps, at last, the claws. Yet he did not speak.

"Soldier," said the princess, conversationally. "Here I am. What will you do?"

Orlando was half sitting up in the bed, crouching, like some cornered thing. He pulled himself upright. "What would you have me do, Your Highness?"

Phedra narrowed her eyes at his tone. "Whatever your imagination can come up with."

"I don't think so," said Orlando.

Phedra padded into the room, her nightgown swirling around her thighs. "Oh, don't be dull! This is a private time. Are you afraid of me?"

"Your word is law in this place."

"Then I could claim you raped me!"

"In my own bedchamber? What would you be doing here?"

Phedra narrowed her eyes again. "I would say you'd crept into my room. Who would be believed?"

"We know the answer to that."

"Then throw dice with the gods! Dally with me! Of course, I *might* have you punished severely! But, then, you'll not find out till dawn. That should lend spice to your performance!" She paused. "If you refuse me, I shall be piqued, and in that mood, more likely to cause trouble for you, surely." She sat down on the end of his bed, reached for his feet through the bedclothes. "Anyway, you desire me. I know it."

How could he deny it? She was there before him, a primeval thing, an essence of woman; dangerous and lovely, caressable and fanged. Here she was, in his room, and the door closed against the world. The vase of blue and the vase of brown resided warmly in



his trunk beneath the window. She was here.

"You did a terrible thing," he said.

"And what was that?" She combed her hair with her fingers, smiling sweetly.

"A man died."

Phedra wrinkled her brow. "And that was terrible? You don't know the meaning of the word. He broke the rules. An animal..." She grimaced, and then reassured the smile. "You know the rules, and I don't even know your name."

"Neither will you," retorted Orlando. "Once a demon knows your name, it gives them power."

Phedra laughed. "I, a demon? How droll! How flattering!"

Could he poison such a senseless child? It seemed unthinkable. And yet the vases called to him. In the silent, isolated world of night, anything was possible, any unspeakable act. Reality was a changed thing in the dark. Didn't she consider he might be afraid, and capable of anything? But there were thoughts, too, of taking what she was offering. And yet, some part of him, remembering daylight, wanted her to explain her behavior. If a woman existed within the demon, the vases could lie cold among the linen.

"Why do you do it?" he asked. "Why torment the men? What have they ever done to you? Their lives are given to protecting yours."

Phedra frowned. "They are fools," she said, "As you are! What is there to protect me from? You stand there like little mannikins of tin, with silly, stern expressions, fawning over the royalty." She stood up, gestured abruptly. "It's pathetic. What are we, but privileged by accident of birth? Why *should* you serve me?"

"The royal family serves the country," Orlando said lamely. "Another king might not be so benevolent to his people — or another queen. I think that's worth protecting."

"Pah!" spat the princess. "I despise you! I despise all of it! You are men as well as soldiers."

"Then why do you report us to our officers?"

Phedra shrugged. "It should show you how stupid the rules are..." She shook a rigid finger at Orlando. "And don't think I'm not as constrained by them as you are! I would give anything for the life of your sister, or your mother, or even your whore. I have no life, but a predetermined pageant. I cannot love anyone but whom my parents decide. I cannot run free, anywhere. I cannot wander through the markets, I cannot choose my friends. In short, I am in prison, with a lifetime's sentence! And Seramis ... hah!" She pulled a sour face. "I will always be second fiddle to her. I expect you think she's an angel. Yes, of course you do. But she's rigid, soldier, rigid as a pole, regarding conformity, and etiquette, and all that muck! Life beneath her rule will be hell for me." Phedra sighed and sat down again, her hands laced between her knees. "She will marry me off to a proper sort of minor duke, who will no doubt be ugly and old and want hundreds of children. I shall be confined in another splendid palace, and my life will be over."

"Then you might as well end it now," said Orlando, and the space between them seemed to condense, become cold.

There was a silence — strained — and then Phedra laughed harshly. "I sometimes think of it," she said. "Then I decide I don't want death, just a different life. Something I can never have." She leaned toward him. "Do you realize I have never spoken this way to anyone?" She paused. "Well, at least not to anyone who's actually listened or who's not tried to shut me up with platitudes after the second word."

"Why choose me?"

She turned away. "I don't know... It must be your looks. I like pretty things."

"And did the soldier who went to his death really attack you, or did he die because you just decided to despise him that night?"

Phedra clearly did not anticipate the question. She looked, momentarily, nonplussed. "He would have killed me," she said at last. "You were not there, so you cannot judge me."

"You drove him to it!"

"Humanity are worms!" declared the princess. "I, as much as any

other. It makes no difference when a life flame is quenched. There are always plenty more. None of us is precious, none of us! I don't care about it! Fate made me a princess, a woman screaming inside, and him a soldier. Fate made our paths cross, to his misfortune. That's all there is to it!"

"You have no regrets," Orlando asked, even now surprised. "Not one?"

She shrugged. "It is hard for me to feel anything at all. Why should I? Who feels for me, my torment? I am a prisoner wielding what little power I have. If that is cruel, then so be it. I will at least leave my mark upon the world. Don't you see how insane it all is? My parents must be aware of everything I do, yet they will not stop me. Why? Because princesses don't do wicked things. We are supposed to be sainted creatures. I am not a living creature to them, but a symbol. If I yawn at a parade, they punish me. Send a man to his death and eyes are turned away. Who are the real demons, soldier, answer me that?"

"You have gone too far," replied Orlando. "You have excuses for your behavior, but they are not enough to comfort the kin of he who died."

The princess threw up her arms. "Oh, stop talking about it! Enter the real world with me, soldier. Why do you think I'm here? We could be a team, you and I. Explore the excesses of experience. Imagine it! I saw it in your eyes today. Break away from the herd, and join me. It is easier than you think."

"Very well." There, the offer had been made. It created a strange irony. Smiling briefly at the princess, Orlando got out of bed and walked across the room. Speaking of the dead man had strengthened his resolve. He would not deliver himself into her clutches, but he was prepared to join her dark world. She had invited him in, hadn't she?

Phedra, encouraged by the smile, eyed his naked body. "You are very beautiful," she said. "What are you doing?"

He did not answer, but knelt down before his trunk and opened the lid.

P

HEDRA ADMIRERED THE CURVE OF HIS BACK, the knobbed protuberances of his spine, his hair spread over his shoulders. It is likely she felt a quickening, then, sure that she had him.

The blue vase was warm in his hands. He did not shake as he prised out the stopper, nor as he swiftly placed three jewels of the bitter liquid on his tongue with the dropper attached to the stopper.

Phedra stood up and went over to him, attempting to peer over his shoulder in the faint light coming through the window.

"What are you doing, soldier?" Her voice was sharp.

He looked up at her. "Where I come from, we have potent aids to pleasure," he said smoothly. "You do want pleasure from me, don't you?"

Phedra frowned slightly. "What aids?"

"There is a special powder that my grandmother mixes." He held up the brown vase. Phedra took it from his hand, wrenched out the stopper, and sniffed the contents.

"What about that other bottle, the one you just took something from?"

Orlando felt his face grow hot, but surely she couldn't see that in the colorless light. "A man's potion," he answered smoothly. "Of no use to you. Whereas the powder..." He gestured at her hands.

She was silent for a few moments, and Orlando's heart contracted. Did she realize what the stuff was? Then, she drew in her breath and smiled a brittle smile. "Well, what do you do with it?"

"It sensitizes the skin. Taste it and see."

Could it be that easy? The moment hung in silence. Then Phedra narrowed her eyes. "You taste it!" she said and thrust the vase at him, adding sourly. "Or is it just a woman's potion?"



*He furiously wiped the powder from his lips,  
which felt numb. I am insane, he thought.  
Insane and weak. Now I will die...*

"No, not just that." Orlando put a finger against the lip of the vase and tilted it. A soft rain of sparkling grains fell out, some of them onto the floor.

"It is pretty," said Phedra. "We must use it lavishly. If it acts as you say, we must use it all over our bodies."

Orlando said nothing, but dusted his lips with the powder.

"Your lips are shining," said Phedra. "How strange it looks. Will I taste it, do you suppose?"

"Let me kiss you, and we'll find out." He stood up.

Phedra was a pale shape before him, diminished by his shadow. She hesitated. He reached for her. For a moment, she resisted, then let him draw her body against his. They clung to each other for a moment, shuddering, then Orlando tried to lift her chin with his hands. He looked into her eyes, which were wide and dark, wondering. He couldn't do it. No. Yet if he didn't, now, what would be his fate? Oh misery, woman, why have you done this? he thought. Why force me to this? He closed his eyes and bent his head to hers. But before he could kiss her, she pulled away, and said, "No."

Orlando felt as if his heart would burst. He was suddenly afraid, yet filled with a profound relief. "No?" he said. "Isn't this what you came here for?"

She gazed at him steadily. "You know that it isn't." She made to turn away.

Panicked, seeing himself dead by noon, Orlando grabbed her arm. "You cannot leave," he said, as calmly as he could manage. "You might regret it."

Phedra went limp in his hold. "You are right," she said. "I might, but that is my decision. I order you, as your princess, to let me go. Don't be afraid. No harm will come to you, I promise."

"Am I to believe that?" Orlando said bitterly. He tightened his grip.

"Yes." Phedra looked him in the eye. "You have my word."

Orlando wasn't aware of releasing her, but soon she was gone, the door closed again. He furiously wiped the powder from his lips, which felt numb. I am insane, he thought. Insane and weak. Now I will die for my weakness.

Later, as he sat awake on his bed, waiting for dawn, for the summons he dreaded, he remembered her words, "You know that it isn't." Why would she say that? Could she have known what the powder was? Surely that was impossible. How could a royal princess know of country poisons, the shadowed province of wise women and witches?

Orlando waited so long for his superior officers to charge into his room and carry him off to execution, he was almost late for breakfast. When the cock had crowed four times, and no one had come, he dressed in a daze and went down to the mess. Colleagues hailed him cheerfully enough. His superior officer, passing, nodded curtly in greeting. Orlando was confused. He felt in a dreamlike state, but as the day progressed, and nothing untoward occurred, he dared to believe Princess Phedra had meant what she said.

Only one thing happened of any import. When he returned to his room later in the day, and by some instinct went to check the vases, they had disappeared from his trunk. In their place was a single compact rose, of the kind Princess Seramis cast at the soldiers' feet.

PHEDRA NEVER BOTHERED THE SENTRIES AGAIN, ALTHOUGH TALES of her wild exploits continued to filter through as gossip among the men. As the years passed, Orlando rose up through the ranks, and was well thought of by his superiors. Sometimes, he thought of the night when Phedra had come to his room, but as time went on, the incident became hazy in his memory. He began to wonder whether he'd dreamed it all.

Almost ten years to the day Orlando had come to Kadrid, the king died and Princess Seramis was crowned. As had been predicted, she was a popular and gracious queen, who took for herself a handsome husband from the royal family of a neighboring kingdom. Almost immediately she began spawning children, who never seemed to drain her youth and stamina, who grew up as beautiful as she.

Thirza, still boisterous and cheerful, took to traveling, representing the royal family abroad.

And Phedra? Seramis found a husband for her, a local duke who was pleasant and avuncular, although not greatly favored in appearance. At the wedding, he pawed his new wife continually, who stood rigidly beside him, sour in nuptial green, her hair pinned up with flowers. Orlando, resplendent in his uniform, watched her through the day. At dusk, she was taken away in a carriage drawn by six white horses. She was rarely seen in the city again.

Orlando kept the flower that had come to replace his vases of remedy and bane. Often, he had wondered about it. The flower was Seramis's mark. Had she taken the poisons away? He thought he would never know.

Rumors came to Kadrid, passed down by the servants of the royal household: Princess Phedra was not happy in marriage. Orlando was not surprised. Events had transpired almost as she'd predicted. He thought of her in her magnificent prison, and wondered whether she still hungered for freedom. She was married only a year and a half when her husband died. A clench of the heart, they said. Orlando thought nothing of it. The man had been fat, given to excess in food and drink. His death was not unexpected, given his lifestyle.

Then, a package came for him. It came at dusk, delivered by a white-skinned page, a beauteous boy, perhaps one of Seramis's creatures, though maybe not. He waited while Orlando opened the package, even though Orlando had attempted to dismiss him with hard glances. Inside, wrapped in white linen, was a single rose, compact of flesh and highly fragranced. It lay in a dusting of sparkling powder. There was no letter with the package, no other sign. Orlando was at first puzzled, then rather outraged. Finally, he laughed.

"I am to say, 'Is there any message?'" said the page.

Orlando looked at the boy. Still laughing, he said, "Only that the offer is still there, without bane, without remedy." He was older now, of high rank, and could say the words with authority, and without recrimination.

The page repeated the message, and left.

Orlando went into his apartment — several rooms were his, now that he was an officer. He sat on a window seat and, covering his fingers with the clean side of the linen wrapping, turned the rose in his hands, making it glow in the light of the rising moon. The fatal powder rained off it like tiny fires. He could so easily have touched the powder as he opened the package. He could have died. A dark and searing thrill awoke in his belly. Soon, she would send for him. ♣



*This faerie will go to any length to prevent man from  
developing her faerie glades.*

He was such a sad, amusing mortal.

Far Rosses' Dell he lusted after hard.  
He and his minions would have killed its  
greenwood  
Dammed the brook, dug up the loamy soil  
To make of it hard, stony, ugly dwellings  
Condos, they are called, and vile they are.

A hundred dreadful changes he'd have  
wrought there  
Black paths, long wires, and all the trees  
destroyed.  
My faerie glade pulled down, my home all  
plundered  
Oh, such a thing could never, never be.

I waited 'til the moon was full and he alone  
along the path.

He had a yellow light and scratchy greatcoat  
Too warm for such a glorious night as that.  
He whiffed a nasty smell like soap and  
whiskey,  
I caught him with a smile and drew him near.

He lost his ugly clothes and stuffy manners  
He, tangled in my faerie magic, yes!

Made love to me in my fantastic bower,  
My milky whiteness melting to his red.

He was like all men,  
And like any man I made him mine.

The faerie glade alone could be my dower.

He handed me the deed with sighs and kisses!  
It made a muck of two long years he'd  
worked.  
No great stone buildings, no outrageous  
profit,  
Instead a faerie wife to bring him grief.

Losing money hurt him! What a ninny!  
That was nothing to the other things I've  
done.

But not at the beginning.

In some fey breath there was that sense  
about him  
Caught my errant fancy. I enjoyed  
The strange new power being loved could  
give me.  
We celebrated 'midst the fairy flowers,

And soon he smelled like moss and other  
nice things.

He was not like others I have loved.  
He wanted not the conquering, but to join.  
And for a day, a week we were combined,  
then.  
He had his power; he was masterful.

Yet not for long. He took me to a city.

He showed me to his friends and praised  
me so.  
He tried to bend me to his dream of women.  
At first I did exactly as he told.  
But subtly I saw him for a bungler.  
What he wanted from me was so trite!

My love was dead. I thought, then, how to  
go on,  
For a little time amuse myself with him.

He took me to a house, oh what a nightmare!

A thing all metal, glass and hard-edged lines.  
He told me of its wonders, then I noticed  
A wood behind the place and was content.

I had a halfling child as soon as might be.

He was little pleased, almost bereft.  
He raved that now a child was not a blessing,  
That there was not the time or faith for it.  
He told me how the world was sick and  
weary.  
As if I cared! Nor did my halfling babe.

No human doctor did I see, nor midwife,  
Nor any other from the ancient town.  
This was to me so new! Delicious spirits!  
We danced the night the baby came, 'til dawn  
Ate up the afterbirth, then drinking, singing,  
Fairy sisters, close as my own heart.

He worshiped money, did my silly husband.

He talked and read and thought of nothing  
else  
Except, of course, of me. And so I teased him.  
He had so much! What was a little less?  
I cozened my sweet, foolish, selfish lover  
A hundred times. It pleased me well enough.

Once I told him how I loved great sapphires,  
So hard to find and costing him so dear.

# A FAERIE'S TALE

BY PAT YORK

*Illustration by Laurie Harden*



He bought them for me. Spent a prince's ransom!

I danced into the wood and flung them down.

In that great house the man was never easy.

Windows broke, blew in, the big roof leaked.  
The fireplace filled the house with ashy smoking.

The servant bought our food early each morning.

Anything left longer spoiled and soured.

Oh, what fun I had at how he acted!

His patience made me bite back screams of glee.

His anger made me jovial as a mummer,

His sorrow was a sight worth watching for!

Sad, sickened, my poor husband,

Talked about new life across the sea  
America, he said, held out a promise  
Luck for one who'd clearly lost his own.  
And I, good wife, agreed that I would go.

One last joke I'd have upon this manling

I told him that I could not bear to fly.

Me! Who fly from heath, to hearth, to heather,  
By moonlight in the breathing of a breath  
Without so much as motion of a leaf.

I pleaded that to leave the earth was death.

I forced a sea trip on him,  
Knowing how annoying it would be.

I conspired with sisters in the ocean  
To make the crossing hideous and long.  
Ill he lay, sleepless, sick and weary.  
One moment I would coddle, next berate.

One night I stood upon the metal railing  
No garments but my hair long, golden-white.

I clung with toes onto a handy cable  
The rush of the white wind and paler light  
Of those within the sea — they were my joy.

He saw me, as I knew he would

Perched in that risky manner,  
And reached for me across the black ship's bow

He begged with tear-stained eyes for me to come down  
And fell into the arms of that dark sea.

I watched him. Laughed as my dear sisters took him  
Dragged him down beneath the lacey waves.  
I found my clothes — went screaming of a drowning  
And came into the new world widow-garbed.  
But now I feel the pull of longed-for places.

The call of my dear wood across the sea.  
Another halfling rests within my body  
So I must rest, but not for very long.

Five hundred years I've lived within that bower,  
And had my way whenever I should choose.  
I'll soon go back there with my little babies  
We'll hide among the fairy rings and play.

When farmers leave us milk in clean white saucers,  
We'll drink it up and give their livestock luck.  
But woe to those who cross us, like that man did!

No luck for them, but trouble and travail.  
For that's our way — daemonour life, our own tradition.

To treat each petty human as we will.  
And spend our easy lives within the green-wood,  
Bathed in dew and moonlight.

So, adieu. ♣





Me 'n' Barclay in the exciting land of make-believe stuff.

# TRIMALCHIO IN WEST EGG

BY HARLAN ELLISON

**B**ARCLAY AND I WERE DIPPING OUR CARROT STICKS IN rosewater, and I said to him, "It has to seem to *grow straight out of the wall*. As if it actually, well, *grew* there, sprouted from the wall like a living thing; fully unexpected, floating above the floor, not touching anywhere; sort of, well, as if —"

"As if it were growing straight out of the wall?"

"That's it! Yes, like —"

"Like it actually, well, *grew* there; sprouted; floating."

"Now you've got it ...." I began, and stopped. Barclay was grinning at Susan, and Susan was grinning at Barclay, and both of them were looking at me as if the Annual World Congress of Morons had agreed to use my brain-stem for a fun waterslide. Instant umbrage! Was I not the vast and cool intellect who had for chrissakes *conceived* this unparalleled fantastic icon? Was it not, in fact, I, who had envisioned it in the head and brought this Shaw lad cross-country to effec-

tuate the dream? So why was they talking on me like as if I was a severely impaired five year old?

No, wait. Not there. Let me not start it there. Let me start it with F. Scott Fitzgerald.

When he wrote it, Fitzgerald didn't title it *The Great Gatsby*. No, his superb novel of the Jazz Age 1920s was originally called *Trimalchio in West Egg*. It was an allusion to the rich patron in Petronius's *Satyricon*. West Egg, of course, was the fanciful nickname for that Long Island aerie of the rich in which the envious Scott placed the peregrinations and partying of Nick and Daisy and their "careless" crowd. Gatsby, as Trimalchio, in 1924, the year before Maxwell

RIGHT: Artist Barclay Shaw is a master of many mediums, including wood as is clearly seen in this elaborately sculpted chess table commissioned by author and friend Harlan Ellison. FAR RIGHT: Ellison seated at his new chess table.

BELOW: The 1989 cover for Ray Bradbury's *Machineries of Joy*.











ABOVE: The cover to the 1983 edition of Harlan Ellison's *Gentleman Junkie*. RIGHT: The final version for Ellison's *Paingod*. An earlier version had the androgenous angel minus the body feathers. Shaw has had the unique opportunity of working directly with Ellison on the cover images for the author's books, with little intervention by the publisher.

Perkins of Scribner's convinced him the now-famous title was more commercially desirable. So Trimalchio's moment in the sun of West Egg never came.

In my secret heart of hearts I see my relationship to the most excellent artist Barclay Shaw as similar to that of Trimalchio, the great patron of art, who provided succor for the noblest creative intellect in the *Satyricon*.

(Sometimes I also imagine I'm the secret lover of Theda Bara, and on occasion I imagine I'm the Easter Bunny, but those are anecdotes for another time, when we have, er, well, more time.) I, the patron; Barclay the West Egg.

In 1985, I wrote some words about my friend Barclay:

*Barclay Shaw is one of the most decent men I have ever met. Were it not a word frequently bent in the minds of the raucous, the word sweet would best serve to describe him. He is a sweet man. Kind and gentle and fair and unassuming.*

The first time I saw one of his paintings — a robot cowboy that had been done for a magazine cover — I bought it. Later that day I bought his fabulous art nouveau desk, carved from living woods, outbidding by thousands of dollars in a twenty-second binge all others besotted by its magnificence. Bid so high, and bid so fast, I left them in my wake suffering from oxygen starvation. Barclay tells me that payday for him allowed him to leave Boston and go to New York to pursue his career in a wider venue. (Trimalchio shirrs the egg.)

It was clear to me that in a world where talent and vision are not as often melded as we might wish (because there is *never* enough of the rarity Talent or the purity Vision to combat all the ineptitude, cupidity,

illiteracy, mediocrity, and obscurantism — of which there is a world more). Barclay Shaw is a *rara avis*, an artist of limitless capacities. His hands do magic. He lives with beauty, and he raises to the level of fine art the merest descriptions of the hand-tied wordsmith. He is the part of my ability to dream that got away, the part that formed another human being, complete and puissant.

I cannot draw. I can see everything inside. But I cannot provide even the barest stick-figure. I don't have it in me. But I see it all. I see the paintings, I see the sculptures, I see the living illustrations. If you've never been thwarted at that level, you cannot know my frustration.

So I design. I design paintings and book jackets and architectural features and sculptures ... and I go to Barclay to make them real. We sit — either together over carrot sticks and rosewater, or across a continent talking late via telecon — and I describe to him what I've seen. I say to him such things as, "It has to seem to *grow straight out of the wall*," and it takes Barclay four years to actualize a mag-









Shaw 10/19/94





nificent fantasy art nouveau chess table to be installed on the third floor of Susan's and my new wing.

Four years. And as much money as I could muster. It isn't inexpensive, but then neither were the Pyramids or the cost to the astonishing hominid who painted the walls of the Chauvet Cave. It is a thing that has never existed in the universe before, and it is the only one *this* universe will ever produce.

And I was permitted to be Trimalchio to the Great Egg who basted that omelette. As I write this, I sit in a hospital bed on the sixth floor of Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles. Yesterday I was admitted, having had a "small heart attack." There are IV drips and EKG monitors attached to me, and I sit here with my typewriter (yeah, yeah, I know; screw you *and* the laptop you slithered in on) and I write about my friend, the very great artist Barclay Shaw. I will be 62 years old in little more than a month. Writing all my life. Many swell feats of legerdemain and many dreams created that I vaingloriously hope will invest my posterity.

*LEFT: Shadow Singer was commissioned by Ballantine for the 1986 book by M.J. Bennett. ABOVE: Mermaid, a non-commissioned painting.*

But I sit here with two linebackers on my chest, tapping away, because in the pantheon of my hubris there are few niches as elegantly tenanted as the one that shows me making it possible for Barclay Shaw to have created wonders unknown to lesser folk. I write of friendship, and of high art, and of dreaming the dreams. Barclay permits me to dip my imagination in his talent, permits me to gull myself that I am Trimalchio.

So for that reason, I write this encomium, at this odd moment of perceived mortality. I write it mostly because Barclay Shaw is, well, a Good Egg. □

*For more art by Barclay, check out his book Electric Dreams from Paper Tiger, available at better comic shops, his screen saver from Second Nature, and his collector cards from FPG.*







*Another tale of the magical, mystical  
isles of Hawaii from the author  
of "Pacifica."*

# THE WOMEN KAHELE LOVED

THE YOUNG CHIEF KAHELE CAME with his wife Nani and many advisers to the district of Wahaula to worship at its famed Wahaula temple.

"For keikis," Kahele said softly to his wife as they walked together along a trail marked by the sharp, broken rocks of an ancient lava flow. He patted Nani's stomach. "A boy or girl, it doesn't matter. This time the gods will not be able to resist our sacrifices or my brother's chants."

Nani forced a smile, but she would be much happier when they left this part of the coast. Wahaula was a kapu temple of the highest rank, dedicated to Kane, Lono, and Ku, three of the most powerful gods. It was forbidden even to chiefs except on those days the sacred fires were not burning. Kahele did not bring human sacrifices, but countless others had in the past and would in the future. It seemed to Nani as if the stink of death permeated the air, borne on the hot Kona winds that had been sweeping the island for days. Still, for the children she desperately wanted, risks had to be taken.

She waited with the advisers as Kahele went alone to the temple to meet his brother Moku, the leader of the Wahaula priests.

Too late, she saw a thin wreath of smoke drift over the temple walls. "Kahele, stop!" she screamed, and would have run to him if her husband's advisers had not grabbed her and held her back.

They shouted to their chief but they could not warn Kahele in time to prevent the smoke from touching his shoulders. No one dared rescue him then for not even a chief was safe from the wrath of a god whose smoke shadow had been crossed by a mortal. The temple bodycatcher and his assistants rushed to meet Kahele. They struck him down before he had time to realize the danger. The unconscious chief was laid on the stone altar and his life taken with bamboo knives while his wife and people watched helplessly.

Many days passed, and the victim's bones were not buried secretly as due a great chief. Rather they were laid away in the temple and it was whispered throughout the surrounding villages that Moku, the leader of the Wahaula kahunas, intended to use the

bones for witchcraft. It was also said, more loudly, that Moku would be the best choice as chief now that his brother had died with no heirs. Surely the gentle and lovely Nani would find Moku as suitable a husband as Kahele had been.

It was this last insult that drove Nani to the black sand beaches of Kalapana in search of her husband's witch. She went alone. Her husband had told her there was a spell on the witch's home and no amount of searching would lead to its discovery. Only if the witch was sure there could be no harm done would she appear to a stranger.

A short walk inland from the Kalapana shore, Nani found a carefully tended taro patch, and near it, a mound of yellow feathers from the

O'o bird. From these signs she was certain the witch must live nearby. She sat down and waited for the witch to show herself.

Night came, and Nani grew hungry. She crossed her hands over her stomach and wished that it were light so she could find a breadfruit grove, but she did not leave. Sounds — strong, terrifying, and unlike those of any bird or animal known to Nani — filled the starless dark. She prayed that this was only a test and that she would not be harmed. Then a fierce wind sprang up and whipped around her. Palm fronds crashed to the ground beside her though the nearest trees were yards away. Rain pelted her bare arms and soaked the kapa cloth wound around her waist. Nani held her ground.

The storm came to an abrupt end and the moon reappeared from behind the clouds. Nani looked around and in the moonlight saw a grass house that had eluded her during the day. It was perched on a rocky ledge facing the ocean. The windows glowed with reflected firelight. Stiff, wet, and hungry, Nani made her way up the ledge until at last she was standing in the open doorway.

She was not sure what she expected to find, but it was not this small, dark-haired, rather ordinary woman who sat on a mat of pandanus leaves, looking up at her and frowning.



"You are persistent," the woman said coldly. Her voice was husky, as though she did not use it often. "Kahele told me as much."

Whether from the damp, her increasing fear, or the mention of Kahele, she did not know, but Nani found herself huddled on the ground beside the witch, shivering, and for the first time since her husband's death, sobbing.

Laukoa sat back and let the younger woman cry. It gave her a chance to observe Kahele's wife through something other than the blurred water pictures she sometimes conjured in the tidepools of Kalapana beach. Kahele had shared many things with Laukoa, but when it came to his wife, he had been unusually reserved. Now, she took the opportunity to satisfy her curiosity. Nani was as beautiful as she had been told, a daughter of chiefs extending back six generations. The woman was tall, with large bones and golden skin, yet markedly more fragile than her size implied. A noble lady, Laukoa thought with contempt, a pampered child who had slaves to do her bidding and no need to think or work or take any action on her own. Still, the woman had remained at Kalapana when most others would have run away; it could not be said that she lacked courage.

Nani continued to sob. Watching her, the witch wondered how long the tears had been held back. She envied the woman's capacity to mourn.

For Laukoa, there had been no tears or wailing at Kahele's death, nor would there be, just a terrible sense of emptiness. She was descended from the mountain women who lived in the cold White Land above the trees on Mauna Kea — witches, or as they called themselves, kupuas. A female kupua would not shed tears over the death of any human, much less a male. Yet despite Laukoa's training in witchcraft, it was hard to deny the desolation she had been feeling since Kahele died.

She took out one of Kahele's soft feather cloaks and put it around Nani's shoulders. Then she found a ti leaf, piled it with dried fish and fresh breadfruit, and handed it to the woman.

Nani brought her grief under control with visible effort. She took the food gratefully and began to eat. After a few minutes, Laukoa joined her. They talked, though uneasily at first and with no mention of Kahele. Each erected polite barriers with words. But Nani grew impatient with Laukoa's terse replies, and her own inability to bring up the purpose of her visit.

Finally, she turned the conversation toward Kahele. "How did you know my husband was dead?" she asked as Laukoa cleared away their meal.

"I had set a few minor charms on Kahele for luck and protection. I could feel their power wane. That happens only in the presence of a more powerful kupua, or when the charmed one dies. It didn't take me long to discover which."

"How?"

"With magic," Laukoa replied.

"Your magic didn't protect him," Nani said, making no effort to keep the bitterness from her voice.

"The spells were for his pleasure; they were never meant to make him immortal."

"He always told me you wouldn't teach him witchcraft."

Laukoa looked down at her hands, then at the flames dancing across the coals in the fire pit. "It can't be learned. One either has the power, or not. At most, I could have given him magic to use. But I didn't want him to depend upon my magic. He would have learned to eventually. Still, I often wove small sorceries without telling him. It pleased me to see him successful."

"Are you saying his brother Moku's magic was greater than yours?"

"Moku? The kahuna at Wahaula temple? He's no sorcerer. He's not even a particularly astute priest."

"Yet he murdered Kahele."

Laukoa turned her face away from the fire to stare at Nani. Their gazes locked and Nani saw that Laukoa's eyes, which had first appeared gray, were now a deep, unfathomable black.

"Tell me," the witch commanded.

"Don't you know already? You're the —"

"Witch," Laukoa interrupted, "Not prophet. I don't foretell the

future. And I see what happens to another person only if I'm looking for them at exactly that moment."

"Kahele was murdered. I was with him when he got a message from Moku to come to Wahaula temple. We had been offering prayers and sacrifices for children. Neither my husband nor I could understand why we had had none in all the years we'd been together. Moku was going to offer a special chant to the gods. He said the temple fires were banked during the first day of each full moon to allow the fire pits to be cleaned. Kahele wasn't watching for the smoke because he didn't expect to see any. Moku denies it now; he says grief has clouded my memory. But he wants to be chief, and I think he has warriors of his own he'll bring in from the other islands if he is not selected."

"They're here already," Laukoa said. "Camped in a valley not far away."

It was Nani's turn to stare. "How do you know that?"

"I track all things that might interfere with me. Kalapana lies between them and your villages. I don't want them crossing here."

**NANI WAS SILENT FOR A LONG WHILE. Finally, she asked, "Will you give me some of your magic? Enough to become chief and repel Moku's invaders?"**

Laukoa cocked her head and regarded Kahele's wife quizzically. "Are you so innocent in the ways of witchcraft that you think all you must do is ask and it will be granted?"

"I'll give you anything you want in return."

"Do not make such promises hastily."

Nani reached out to take Laukoa by the arm. "My husband united all the villages along this coast. Some he conquered, others he gained by ... " she paused for a moment before continuing, "others, he gained by his marriage to me. He was a fair and generous chief who preferred negotiation to battle. When he traveled to the smaller islands he took no warriors; yet he was never harmed. The other chiefs respected him as a man of peace. Moku will destroy everything Kahele spent his lifetime building; he won't be content to stay here and allow our people to prosper in peace."

She withdrew her arm from Laukoa and folded her hands in her lap. "Kahele told me how much he loved you. I doubt he meant to be cruel; he wanted me to understand. He said I was like the sea; I brought him fortune and peace, and however much we both changed, we would always be there to help one another. But you were the wind, coming and going as you pleased, a force he could neither train nor predict, only follow if he cared to. He thought himself especially lucky to have us both." She regarded the witch carefully. "Of course, he was never certain what you felt for him. He said the only way he'd ever find out was to watch what you did after he died."

"He probably wondered if I'd wail and tear my hair over him," Laukoa said scornfully. "I didn't."

"But would you help me keep his dreams alive? Would you help avenge his murder?"

A prolonged silence followed. Nani's fingers dug into her palm as she forced herself not to plead further. Where could she go if the witch would not assist her? Under no circumstances would she allow Moku to destroy Kahele's legacy.

Laukoa finally broke the tension by smiling. Hers was a taut, chilling smile and, in spite of the fire's heat and the warm cloak about her shoulders, Nani shivered.

"The price will be two-fold," Laukoa said. "First, you will accept a great truth about yourself, one that shall bring you sorrow all your life. Second, you will not take revenge upon Moku. His punishment belongs to me."

"I agree," Nani said without hesitation.

"Good. Sleep well tonight. Tomorrow, we shall start by making you into a chief."

That night as Nani slept, Laukoa wove a timebinding spell all



around Kalapana so that when Nani awakened and began her training, what seemed like years to her would be less than a day anywhere else on the island of Hawaii.

Then she prayed to Milu, god of the underworld and regent of the land of Po. "A great chief's spirit is condemned to wander the living world when he should be among your loyal subjects. His ghost is denied to you. If you will search the living world and send his ghost to me, I'll reunite his spirit with his body that he might enter the land of Po as is his right, and there do you honor."

Milu answered the kupua's prayers. Just before dawn messengers of the underworld god found the ghost of Kahele and directed it to Laukoa.

Kahele stood before the witch, as insubstantial as a wisp of fog, yet so clear that she could see every feature including the long reddened scars where the temple priests had opened his veins. The ghost looked over at his sleeping wife. "Are you treating her well?"

Laukoa nodded, marveling at how closely the apparition's voice matched that of the living Kahele. "She came to me for magic. She wished to be chief."

"She would be better for our people than Moku. But it's not possible. I gave her too protected a life; she was a child when I married her and I never allowed her to become more than that."

"Judge yourself harshly if you like, but not her. She already has the intelligence to become a chief, and I can give her the skill."

"Then what do you need of me?"

"Milu knows you belong in his world. I have agreed to help you get there. But first I want you to make another journey, this one to the shark god. Nani will need witchcraft to fend off Moku's warriors, more even than I have. But Kauhuhu owes me for past favors. I want you to take a message to him in his kingdom under the sea. Not even a kupua can reach the shark god there, but water will not stop a ghost."

She gave Kahele the message he was to deliver and had him leave quickly. She was surprised at how painful it was to see him, yet not be able to touch him. "When you come back we will plan our vengeance upon Moku. And we'll unite your spirit with your body."

The ghost smiled gently and a bit sadly. "Only the latter, kupua. Anything else will cost you far too much."

He left her to puzzle over his words.

USING THE TIME SECURED BY HER SPELLS, LAUKOA SPENT THE NEXT many months training Nani as a warrior and chief. She set the woman a course to run along the Kalapana surf and up the steep bluffs overlooking the beach. At first she ran beside Nani, prodding her to run faster and farther each time. But Nani needed little persuasion. She was a tireless, uncomplaining student, albeit sometimes a clumsy one. Her physical strength increased ten times over, though never as quickly or as much as Nani would have liked. But the lessons did not end there. Each evening, however exhausted Nani might be from the day's events, Laukoa would engage her in games. Many were the ones Nani had watched Kahele play with his advisers; a few were new, designed, she soon realized, to teach her tactics and strategy for battle. She never won; but there was delight in forcing Laukoa to take longer and longer to defeat her pupil.

Once running had become as natural as breathing to Nani, Laukoa began teaching her student the throwing arts, first with a spear and then with a pikoi, the throwing stone mastered only by the best warriors.

"It's beautiful," Nani said, stroking the polished dark wood handle of Laukoa's pikoi. From the end of the handle, a braided cord of human hair unwound in coils at her feet. A glistening stone knob was fastened to the cord.

"The stone is pahoehoe, the smoothest lava rock found on Mauna Kea. I had two, but I gave one to Kahele."

"I know. He never went anywhere without it."

While Laukoa spent her afternoons tending the taro bed and setting out the fishing lines, Nani practiced with the pikoi. Properly thrown, it could trip and ensnare an animal or a person. But for many weeks, it seemed to Nani that she would never be able to throw the stone at all, much less with Laukoa's unfailing accuracy.

"Rest for a while," Laukoa said. "The stone can wait until tomorrow."

Nani frowned with concentration. "Tonight, I'll make at least one perfect throw of the pikoi. I'm going to stay out here until I do."

She made toss after toss. Once in a while, at Nani's insistence, the witch would demonstrate the wrist-flicking action needed to send the pikoi in a whirl of coiled braid toward its target. But for the most part, Laukoa waited and watched, and saw in the woman's tenacity some of what had made Nani so special to Kahele. She realized warily that Nani was also becoming special to her.

Finally, long after dark, Nani made her perfect throw. The pikoi arced through the air, spinning a tight circle around the driftwood target.

"You see! I told you this would be my day!"

"Your night," corrected Laukoa. "One that you have earned."

Nani ran to the driftwood, retrieved the throwing stone, and held it high overhead. "I'm going to be chief! Do you hear me Moku?" she shouted. "I am going to be chief!"

## THE TRAINING PROGRESSED EVEN faster during the next months, with Nani honing the physical and tactical skills she would need as chief.

On a warm summer evening during her second year at Kalapana, Nani found one of the teaching games taking an extraordinarily long time, and it was with some amazement that she at last captured all of Laukoa's playing pieces.

Laukoa just laughed. "Since the passing of the harvest season, I've had to use magic to best you and still get my sleep. Tonight, I tested my unaided hand against yours. You see how much you've learned."

Nani gathered up the wooden markers and shifted them first from one palm, then to the other, and back again. "I'll be ready to leave soon, won't I?"

"You're ready now."

"It's as though I belong here. I almost don't want to go back. If it were not for my people, and Kahele's ..." She looked up at Laukoa, as if searching her face for some sort of answer. "I miss Kahele, but I haven't felt a sadness for him in many months."

Laukoa noted with surprise that she, too, had not thought about Kahele recently, at least not with the overwhelming sense of loss she had felt when she first learned of his death.

Nani smiled shyly. "Is it true that the kupuas of Mauna Kea don't take men for lovers?"

"I took Kahele."

Nani said nothing, and Laukoa felt compelled to answer more honestly. "It can be true. Kupuas are not human; we are created by other forces — the gods perhaps, or, as some believe, by demons. But whichever it is, we cannot bear children. So we kupuas of the White Land take our lovers when and where we please — among animals, among men, but mostly among ourselves."

"Show me."

Laukoa hesitated a moment, caught between her desire for Nani, and a concern this would somehow be a betrayal of Kahele. But he had freely admitted to loving both the kupua and his wife; he never questioned Laukoa as to her activities when he was not with her. In truth, she knew he would have been surprised to learn how faithful she was to him.

Nani waited, tall and regal in the firelight, her expression like that of a child who was about to embark upon a great adventure — nervous, frightened, exhilarated. Finally, Laukoa got up and stood before Nani. She reached out to unfasten the fiber braid that held the Kapa cloth at Nani's waist. When the cloth had dropped to the floor, she guided Kahele's wife to the sleeping mats in the corner where, as carefully and thoroughly as possible, Laukoa taught her student the ways of the White Land witches.

Just after dawn, Laukoa lay in Nani's arms, listening to the birds chattering in the rock outcroppings that sheltered the grass house.



"They're building their family nests," Nani murmured. "I always wanted to have Kahele's child. And now, with you — if such a thing were possible, imagine what children we might have."

"No."

"When I am chief, I can take men for lovers to have their babies. You would still be my witch as you were Kahele's."

"No."

Nani raised up on one elbow. "I didn't mean to sound as though I'd own you. It would be as it was with my hus —"

"Nani, don't," the witch said softly. "I told you once there was a price for all you've been taught, and a price for the magic I will give you."

"You said only that you'd tell me a truth about myself."

"Yes — one that will bring sadness all your life. The truth is this: There won't be any children for you Nani, not ever."

Nani stared at Laukoa for a moment. "You would take my family? You never told me that was the price."

"I have taken nothing except your hope for a child. That's the real price of magic — to learn more about yourself than it is good to know."

"How can you be sure? Perhaps ..."

But her words died away as Laukoa shook her head. The woman buried her face in Laukoa's dark hair and for the first time since that long ago night when she had cried for her husband, Nani wept.

Kahele's ghost returned from his journey to the shark god's kingdom that afternoon. He appeared before Laukoa as she tended the taro beds. In his hands were eight white and silver shells, which he poured into Laukoa's lap. "Kauhuhu gives you these, and also his wishes for your continued fortune. Will Nani know how to use them?"

"I'll show her. It would please you to see how much she has learned. She will serve your people well as chief."

"She has an excellent teacher."

"Once she has learned to use the shells, my dealings with Nani will be finished. Then you must tell me how to gain entry to the Wahaula temple and where they are keeping your bones."

"Forget your vengeance. Stay with Nani and help her in her reign."

"I can't now that I've given her magic to use. It's a terrible thing to do to mortals, for once they try witchcraft it becomes an obsession. If I stayed, she'd want to use my powers more and more. In the end she'd be destroyed. While you lived, I never allowed you to knowingly use my magic. I'll give your wife what she wants. But you still have something I need. While you are bound by Milu of the underworld to serve me, I demand that you tell me how to find Moku."

"The price —"

"It doesn't matter," she interrupted. "Tell me."

"You didn't listen to me in life; I am a fool to expect more in death." The wistfulness of Kahele's tone suddenly reminded Laukoa of the long talks they used to have in the early mornings before he would leave to return to his village. She would miss him terribly when she no longer had Nani to fill the void.

"Go to Moku on the first day of the full moon," Kahele said. "He spoke truly when he said the temple fire pits are cleaned then; an exception was made to trap me. You must approach him fully human and lie with him. Once you have done so, place some article of mine beneath him. Then he will have to answer any question you put to him. He will tell you where he has hidden my bones. Move them outside the temple. Then, for a short time you will have Pele's favor and her fire. Use it wisely."

Kahele's ghostly figure paled to a blur, then disappeared.

Laukoa ran back to her home with the shells from the shark god. Nani had dried her tears and was practicing with the pikoi on the ridge above the beach.

"Take these back to your village," the witch instructed as she handed the shells to Nani. "When you begin the battle throw the shells into the air and they will come to the aid of your warriors."

A doubting look lingered for a moment on Nani's face but she thanked the kupua for her generosity.

"Take this, too." Laukoa gave her a small pouch filled with ashes. "You've seen me use them in the water. They'll prove useful to you, as well."

A long hug, and a touching of noses followed. Then Nani walked

up the rock-strewn path from Kalapana, beginning her return journey to her village. Only by the strongest force of will was she able to keep from looking back at Laukoa.

## WHEN SHE FINALLY ARRIVED HOME, Nani found that Kahele's advisers had gathered in the chiefs' compound to select the new chief. Moku was there,

wearing the garb of a kahuna but also a fine yellow-feathered helmet that had once belonged to Kahele. Nani resisted the urge to tear it from the priest's head. Instead she sat quietly at the back, watching to see where she might find her support. When the arguments had run their course, she stepped forward. In specific detail, she accused Moku of his brother's murder. She was not sure these men believed her story, but she finished her accusations with a complete description of the outer island warriors gathered to await Moku's command. "My poor brother's widow is mad," the priest said smoothly. "I am a kahuna, and if I can serve you as your chief, it would be a great honor. What man would follow a lone, crazy woman?"

"There have been female chiefs before," Nani responded.

"But none so poorly prepared for leadership," Moku said with a broad smile. There were murmurs of agreement among the advisers.

It would do no good to trade insults with the kahuna, she realized. She would have to show these men what she had learned.

"When the time comes, I'll give you leadership. For now, I'll give you truth." She took out the pouch Laukoa had given her and poured part of the ash into her palm. Moving quickly around the circle of advisers, she sprinkled ashes into the water bowls beside each man.

"Observe the truth."

There was a series of gasps as the clouded water in the bowls suddenly cleared to show a view of the high plain where Moku's forces were camped.

Moku visibly paled, and the truth of Nani's words were written for all to see in the priest's flight from the courtyard.

The advisers quickly confirmed Nani as the new chief, though she was not sure if it was her use of magic or Moku's unmasking that garnered her the rank.

At her command, messengers hastened to warn the coastal villages of an imminent attack. If some of Kahele's warriors at first hesitated to be led by his wife, their reluctance faded as Nani demonstrated her hard-won skill with spear and pikoi.

Just before the battle was engaged, Nani took out the shells Laukoa had given her. She threw them into the air, and from every place a shell landed, a squat, dark soldier sprang up, clothed in an intricately painted kapa cloak. These eight strange and silent men joined Nani's warriors.

As the battle was joined, she saw that the shell men fought harder than any of her other warriors, but she also saw that her forces were badly outnumbered by Moku's army. Then, at the precise point Nani feared she would have to order a retreat, the shell soldiers threw off their cloaks to reveal a mouth across their back, a mouth like that of a shark and filled with fierce, sharp, shark's teeth.

With much snapping and tearing of flesh, the shell soldiers made short work of Moku's warriors. Most of the beleaguered men fled in terror at the sight of Nani's forces. She let them go, knowing that the word they spread of her magic would do her more good than harm.

When the battle was finally over, the shell men, their mouths bloody with the remains of human flesh, dived into the ocean and disappeared as wordlessly as they had come.

Nani had each body examined so that she might determine if Moku had died in the fray. But one wounded prisoner said he last saw Moku leaving the battlefield and hastening toward the shelter of the Wahaula temple where he was sure to be given refuge.

So it was to be up to Laukoa, after all, Nani thought, and silently wished the witch good fortune and success.

Laukoa had conjured up water pictures of Nani's battle. She sat



near the largest tide pool on Kalapana beach, her knees drawn up to her chin, staring into the green depths of the pool to see how Nani fared. It pleased her to note the new chief's skill in deploying her small band against Moku's forces. The witch observed Moku as he ran from the field in cowardly haste. He had no place to go but the Wahaula temple, she thought. His punishment could wait until the first day of the next full moon.

She spent the next weeks drying fish and harvesting her crops. It was impossible to stay at Kalapana; the shining black beaches carried too many memories. While she did not want to forget Kahele or Nani, neither did she wish to be constantly reminded of them. She had come down from the White Land in search of adventure, and had found it in the person of Kahele. Men, her sister kupuas had warned, were brutal, unpredictable creatures. It seemed at first that her sisters were right, and she closeted herself at Kalapana, hidden by charms and spells of unseeing. But as Kahele had shown her, some men were different — gentle, curious, and full of humor. She had parted company with lovers before, but those endings had been long in coming, and had been mutually desired. No one had warned her how painful it could be to lose a loved one or worse, as with Nani, to give one up.

## **WHEN SHE HAD COMPLETED HER TASKS for Milu of the underworld, she would leave the large island entirely and once again begin a journey, this time to**

unknown islands. Her outrigger canoe waited at the edge of the lagoon, hidden from view by special charms. Kahele had helped her make it from a hollowed-out koa tree, but because no priest chanted over it, and she had offered no sacrifices to ensure its safety, he had been certain it would not bear her weight. Two voyages later, he finally changed his mind and agreed that a kupua-made canoe might have powers beyond his knowledge.

By the time she had provisioned the canoe, it was the first day of the full moon.

"Make yourself fully human," Kahele had told her. As she walked toward Wahaula temple, she concentrated on pushing to one side all that made her a kupua. By the time she reached the compound, she felt strangely naked and afraid.

There were no fires to send deadly smoke. The temple was quiet, and only a few inquisitive young priests came out to greet her.

She was amazed at how easily she gained entrance. No sooner had she announced her wish to see Moku than she was searched for weapons and then taken to a small room off to one side of the central altar.

"So you've come to worship, little one. There's no need to be shy; come over by me."

She thought at first he was expecting her. But she quickly realized he was expecting only a woman and any female body would have done as well. The ghost of Kahele must have known Moku's habits, and she had been told she must lie with Moku. Still, while she was prepared for the passionless and calculated manner in which Moku took her, she was shocked by her own revulsion. It could not be said that the kahuna raped her, for she had come willingly, and though it had not proved necessary, she had also come prepared to seduce the man.

Yet she felt violated. It occurred to her with frightening clarity that it was not Moku who defiled her, but she who had violated herself.

When Moku was finished, and lay beside her half-asleep, she slipped a feather from Kahele's favorite cloak under Moku's back. Then she asked him where he had hidden the bones of his brother.

"Under the third mat from the altar," Moku mumbled. He rolled over on his stomach and promptly fell asleep.

Laukoa scrambled to her feet, and went to the doorway. There were no other priests in sight, and she gathered that Moku had instructed the kahunas to leave them alone. She went to the third mat in the main room of the Wahaula temple. It covered part of the floor along the north corner of the building. When she lifted the mat she found a long, shallow trench filled with kapa-wrapped bones

and the pikoi Kahele had been so proud to own. These she removed to the coconut grove that surrounded the temple. Then she drew back within herself that which made her a kupua. As she did so, a great burning sensation filled her loins. She had wanted vengeance and now she had the means. A new power, a temporary one she was certain, was hers.

She stared at Wahaula temple, seeing the tiny wisp of smoke that rose through the hole in the matted roof and spiraled up and away from the nearby villages. She imagined flames, and suddenly there was fire bursting through the grass walls. She pictured Moku burning alive, and his screams followed immediately. The priests came running into the temple courtyard, but were driven back by the intense heat. Other people came from the villages to see what was happening. But the fear of getting in the path of sacred smoke prevented them from going to the rescue of the man inside the temple.

All the while, Laukoa stood guard over Kahele's body, and listened to Moku die. No one disturbed her, and after a while she understood that this fire was the gift from Pele, promised by Milu of the underworld. She understood, too, that for the short time she had this power, she would remain unseen.

She waited for Nani's warriors to find the bones of Kahele. When they had, and when she saw by the reverence shown the body that it would be hidden away honorably and joined with its spirit once again, she began the trek back to Kalapana.

Pele's fire left her, to be replaced with a distinct uncleanness. She stopped to bathe in the ocean, feeling a dark satisfaction in the stinging salt spray. But it was not enough to make her whole. She had been fully human only once before in her life, at Kahele's request and as a joke more than anything else. He had not been pleased at the result, finding that it changed her too much; made her into a person he did not know. But his ghost had known that to be human with Moku was not a lovers' game; he had tried to warn her.

A small fire burned on the Kalapana beach when Laukoa returned, and near it was Nani, wrapped in a feathered cloak to ward off the night chill.

The witch sat down beside the new chief. "I would prefer to be alone tonight."

"I don't believe that. Kahele came to me in a dream last night. He said that you would need me, so I came here. It has to do with Wahaula temple, doesn't it?"

Laukoa clenched her eyelids shut and said nothing.

"I know the price I'm paying for my magic," Nani continued. "Isn't there one for kupuas as well?"

"We work magic all our lives; whatever the cost, we've always paid it, so we don't usually notice."

Nani leaned back on her elbows. "The strangest part of being chief is how I have to listen to everyone's words and look for the meanings behind them. But I'm very good at the game. Your words, for instance, are meant to mislead me."

"To protect you, I think."

"Don't ever protect me from yourself. Let me help."

"You can't. You know now that you will never have children, and you must live with that knowledge. Today I learned some things about myself —" the kupua's voice broke. "Revenge is a harsh, clean emotion, one that I understand well. But I was human for a little while and my revenge became tainted with guilt and self-interest. By the time I killed Moku, I was no longer certain if I did so for Kahele or myself. And if I did it for myself, I did not have sufficient reason." There were tears on Laukoa's cheeks that she made no effort to brush away. She looked up at Nani. "Can you understand this?"

The chief reflected for a moment before shaking her head. "No more than you truly understand what it means for me not to have children. But I know it's important. And I know it's painful. Stay with me tonight."

"I'll still be leaving tomorrow."

"I know. I won't try to stop you."

Nani spread her cloak on the sand, and drew Laukoa down next to her. There, for the space of a few hours, they turned away from their separate fears, and toward each other. ♀



## A changing of the guard. Civilization loses its place as the yardstick of strategy.

**T**HEN JOINED ISSUE TIAMAT AND MARDUK, WISEST OF THE GODS. THEY STROVE IN SINGLE combat, locked in battle ... Having thus subdued her, he extinguished her life. He cast down her carcass to stand on it.

In Babylonian myth, there were two primary generations of gods. Apsu, the sky god, and Tiamat, the chaos goddess started the ball rolling. These two were the parents of a younger generation of gods. Eventually the kids became restless.

Marduk, the leader of these matricidal rebels, tackled his mom. In the end (or the beginning, depending on your point of view) Marduk was victorious. He ripped Tiamat's vast body to pieces, using it to form the world.

This tale may sound more than a little grisly, but it's certainly not unique. Many creation stories begin with a first order of gods who are later overwhelmed by more vigorous upstarts. Tiamat is slaughtered.

The titans fall. Ken Griffey, Jr. outdoes the old man. So it goes —

From the dawn of this column, back when the land was young, I have made a habit of comparing every new computer strategy game to a pair of modern classics — *Civilization* and *Master of Orion*.

Below: Elves, goblins, and (insert) orcs do battle in Games Workshop's Warhammer. Next page: Civilization II lets the gameplayer build and destroy empires.



Neither game featured state-of-the-art graphics, sound, or multimedia. What they offered instead was phenomenally balanced play and a diplomacy system that brought your computer opponents to life. For nearly five years, nothing could topple this pair from the top of the strategy ranks. Prettier programs were easy to find, but better programs were nonexistent.

Now one of the gods has fallen, and just as in mythology, it was the child that slew the parent. *Civilization II* is Microprose's sequel to their empire builder, and it's the heir apparent to poppa's crown. In creating this game, Microprose has, wisely, hewed close to the path defined by the original. But improvements have been made in almost every area.

From the very beginning of play, you'll see the main difference between this version and its parent: more options. There are new tribes to lead, new choices in difficulty and game length, and new flourishes of multimedia to support them all. For female players turned off by the original game's male-only ruler's club, you'll find that women are equally represented this time around.

The main map is still where most of the action takes place. It used to look much like a traditional paper map strewn with cardboard markers, but now it's been replaced by a three-quarters perspective display that takes full advantage of high resolution displays and increased color depth. Trees, men, and cities all stand out from the background in great detail. The units themselves no longer look like blocky icons, but like tiny models of the items they represent. Visually, this version is way out in front.

The economic model in the original game was at best bare bones. *Civilization II* expands considerably on this area of play. Laws of supply and demand now have a huge effect on the benefit of trade. Limits placed on each style of government put pressure on despots to get out there and learn a new style or face empty coffers.

Research, already well-integrated into the original, has changed little



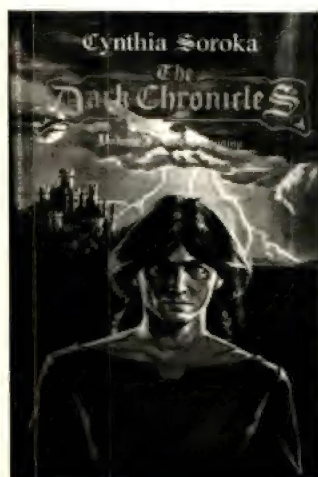


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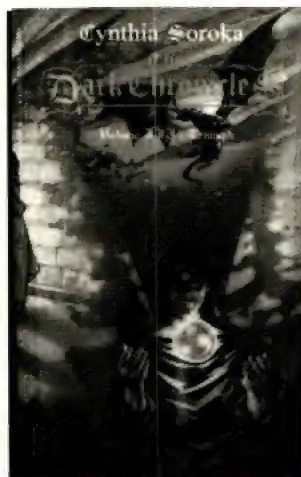
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is plenty of room for clever maneuvering and marshalling forces. But there is enough simplicity to allow fast and furious combat.

These boxed sets have been running out of the stores as fast as they arrive. If you see one, my advice is to snatch it up, run for home, and prepare to turn your living room into a war zone.

## Resident Evil brings adventuring to horrible life.

For some time now, I've been worried about the future of fantasy adventure gaming on the computer. It's a fine genre, one that has produced some of the real classics of silicon. For years, adventure series were followed avidly, and each new release offered improvements over the last. But lately, such games have been feeling stale.

It's beginning to seem like most recent adventure games don't really offer much play value for the gaming dollar. After all, prices haven't gone down with length of play, they've gone up. This has been reflected on the sales charts. Where adventure games once dominated the top of the chart, recent releases have performed anemically. When you can measure enjoyment in dollars per minute, it's hard to blame the consumers.

But my hope has been somewhat restored by a new release in an unexpected place — *Resident Evil* for the Sony Playstation. Even more unlikely, it's from Capcom, best known for their series of arcade beat-'em-ups. This title is going to change a lot of minds about both consoles and console companies.

Most game machines these days are CD-based, boasting storage capacities equal to those of a PC. *Resident Evil* puts that capacity to use, filling the disc with actual gaming instead of the "hours of original video" which so many titles brag about. This title merges some of the hottest technologies in gaming with solid play to produce one of the most satisfying adventures in years.

This game is based around a very dark horror theme. If you can't take the sight of shuffling zombies, giant spiders, and plenty of gore, you don't want to be involved with this game.

In the game, a small town has fallen victim to a mysterious disaster. As part of a paramilitary team choppered in to investigate, your character soon discovers that the town has been overrun with the living dead. Pasty-faced figures lie around every turn, ready to consume those still possessed of a heartbeat. Even the town pooches have been transformed into bloodthirsty hellhounds. Only you can put these monsters back in their graves and prevent this nightmare from spreading across the world.

You can choose to play the game either from the perspective of a woman on the team, or a man. There's more to this choice than just the curves of your on-screen surrogate. The woman starts the adventure well-armed with a pistol and spare bullets. The

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man has to make a go of it with only a knife until he stumbles across something better. You'll also find that the game is a little more generous to the female character, stepping in to provide assistance at some key points.

The cutting edge is visible everywhere in this game. You can see it in the 3-D polygonal characters, the photorealistic backgrounds, and the smooth integration of canned scenes with the action. Rather than the tried and true flat look of most adventures, the whole game is rendered in well-done, textured mapped 3-D. Characters, monsters, tables, stairs, and objects of all sizes interact in space. There are even mirrors in which you can catch a glimpse of your character's reflection. This is one of the most "solid" game worlds yet created.

As you move around, the "camera" position shifts. You might see your character close-up as she opens a door, then find yourself switched to a trailing shot as she moves down a hallway, and then suddenly to an overhead shot in a confrontation with the undead. This shifting viewpoint can be irritating. But when it works, this moving camera serves to add a sense of cinematic drama.

The adventure aspects of *Resident Evil* are quite traditional. Find the key that will open the locked door. Locate the map. Solve logic puzzles to reveal hidden areas and obtain new clues. You won't find any of the brain-smokers that filled the best Infocom text adventures, but some of the puzzles are downright clever.

The program does fall down on two points. Transitions between areas are covered by a close-up of a doorway swinging open, or a staircase moving past. Instead of bridging rooms, these views are jarringly out of sync with the graphics found in the rest of the game. These doors, which float in a black void, have no sense of reality and only serve to pull the player out of the game.

The doors are a minor irritation. Where the program is really hurting is in the writing. Not in the structure of the adventure, mind you. That works just fine, with a story built up gradually by clues scattered through the creepy house and nearby environs. It's the cut scene dialogue that's painfully, dreadfully bad. The dialogue makes our female hero sound like a vapid valley girl. It makes both of the male characters sound like brainless jerks. Worst of all, it flat out doesn't make sense. Where many adventures use these scenes to add depth to the story and play, the cut scenes here are so awful as to be the poorest part of the game.

Still, *Resident Evil* presents game play and graphics so good that they transcend the poor dialogue. In doing so, it shows that the adventure game is not dead, merely resting. With a mixture of elements from traditional adventure and the latest techniques, this game should serve as a pointer for others wondering if there's still room for adventure on the shelves. And the brisk sales should be a wake-up call for developers. ■

## BOOKS

Continued from page 17

sider it a collection of some of the most well-written, involving, disturbing stories published in the last few years.

"The Mouse" by Neil Gaiman is a wonderful example. In it, a man named Regan struggles to catch the mice who have invaded his kitchen in a humane trap that captures the mice without killing them. In the meantime, Janice, Regan's wife, has an abortion. Regan obviously wants her to have the abortion though he gives Janice no support at all. In fact, when she complains about how much it hurt, he says, "I don't have to listen to this." The story makes us compare the fate of the mice with that of the foetus, and in drawing the parallel, Gaiman creates both insight and mystery. The story is dense with words left unsaid, facts left unknown, and it captures us with its mystery. You feel compelled to try to fit all the pieces together in a simple way, so that you can put the story behind you and move on. But the truth is, you can't.

For those who like a stronger plot, "Holding Hands" by Charles L. Grant grabs the reader with a mystery and doesn't reveal the answer until the end. The story is written entirely as a father's monologue to his daughter. As he speaks, we get more and more worried about what he has done and what he's going to do. Information is released in tight, frightening packets, as when the father explains, "The house wouldn't let me say what I really wanted." It's lines like this that kept me up at night.

One of the most beautifully written stories in the anthology is "Dead Man's Shoes" by Charles de Lint. The superstition goes that if you don't remove the shoes from a dead man, he'll walk after his death, and get revenge on whoever killed him. The plot takes some nice unexpected turns and has a shocker ending, but the element that struck me most was the incredibly vivid, powerful way that de Lint describes the dead man and the dreams of the woman haunted by him.

The most bizarre story in the book would have to be "Splints" by D.F. Lewis. If you haven't discovered Lewis yet, give him a try. Chances are, with his bizarre plots and challenging writing style, you'll either love him or hate him. I come down on the "love him" side of this debate, even though I felt I still hadn't quite understood the story after two readings. I couldn't get it out of my head either.

*Touch Wood* includes other strong entries by Yvonne Navarro, Karl Edward Wagner, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Bill Pronzini, Spider Robinson, Thomas F. Monteleone, Stanley Wiater, William Relling, Jr., and many others. While the topic and the skull face on the cover may not be particularly attention-grabbing, the stories within make this a very special collection that will grab your attention and will not release it for some time to come.

Jeanne Cavelos



# FOLKROOTS

Continued from page 29

everyone sending out for booze for the wedding./So we're all supposed to be happy?/But how about you, my fallen fair maiden/nor the drama's over, tell me/how goes the glamourie?/After the twelve casks of good claret wine/and the twelve and twelve of muskadine, tell me/what about you?/How do you think Tam Lin will take all the changes you go through?

Neil Gaiman works with another old British seduction ballad, Reynardine the Fox, in his poem "The White Road" (from *Ruby Slippers, Golden Tears*): *There was something sly about his smile,/his eyes so black and sharp, his rufous hair. Something that sent her early to their trysting place/beneath the oak, beside the thornbush,/something that made her climb the tree and wait./Climb a tree and in her condition./Her love arrived at dusk, skulking by owl-light, carrying a bag,/from which he took a mattock, shovel, knife./He worked with a will, beside the thornbush,/beneath the oaken tree,/and he whistled gently, and he sang, as he dug her grave,/that old song ... /shall I sing it for you now, good folk?"*

Magical poems can be found in many sources — in mainstream poetry collections, in genre anthologies, in literary journals and in beautiful handset broadsheet publications. (For lovely examples of the later, look for the *Midsummer Night's Press* poetry series published by Lawrence Schimel.) In the introduction to her excellent collection, *Trail of Stones*, Gwen Strauss speaks eloquently about the process of spinning fairy tales into poems:

"Whether it is a princess calling down a well, a witch seeking out her own reflection, children following a trail into the woods, falling asleep or into blindness, a common threat in our portraits is that each of these characters is compelled to turn inward. Though each confronts different issues — fear of love, shame, grief, jealousy, loneliness, joy — they have in common a time of solitude. They are enclosed within a private crisis. They have entered a dark wood where they must either face themselves, or refuse to, but they are given the choice to change. The momentum of self-revelation leads them toward metamorphosis, like a trail of stones drawing them into the dark forest."

Listening, listening; it is never still, writes Randall Jarrell in his poem "Marchen." *This is the forest: long ago the lives/Edged armed into its tides (the axes were its stone)/Lashed with the skins of dwellers to its boughs;/We felled our islands there, at last, with iron./The sunlight fell to them, according to our wish./And we believed, till nightfall, in that wish;/We believed, till nightfall, in our lives.*

Modern poets using fairy tale themes take us back into that ancient forest, where we believe, once again, in the power of wishes, of magic, and of life itself. ♠

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## GOLDFISH

Continued from page 38

ing what's wrong with me. It's all in this book. Sort of."

Earl examined the low-browed flaming skull on the cover. "I hate to tell you, but this is a make-believe book."

"I know. But the idea's right."

"Hmf!" said Earl. "When Tieleke buys it, I'll buy it."

"Don't you want to hear what it is?"

"Not particularly."

Michael told him anyway. Earl didn't buy it. Michael took the paperback to his eight o'clock session next morning and laid it on the desk. "I've figured it out."

"Figured what out?" asked Dr. Tieleke.

"Why I can only remember being a fish."

Dr. Tieleke leaned forward. "Why?"

"Because I am one."

Dr. Tieleke's look of surprise was very mild indeed. "Oh? In what way?"

"Physically. I was reading this story — *The Shadow Out of Time*. I know it's not true, but it sounded familiar. This man gets amnesia, and he has to learn about his body again, and he's changed from what he was before, just like me."

"And he used to be a fish?"

"No. The details are all different. You know what an alien is? An alien wanted to learn about Earth, so it put its soul into the man's body and used it. And I thought, 'Wow, if you could really do that, that would explain a lot!' And then I thought, 'But I have really done it.' And I remembered." He did not care for the thoughtful expression on the doctor's face. "I'm not Michael Sandoval. I'm a fish that didn't want to be stuck in a pond all my life. When Michael Sandoval looked down and wanted to be me, I looked up, and wanted to be him. And — here I am."

"And Michael's in the pool at Sunken Gardens?"

"Yes. In my old body." An unpleasant thought occurred to him. "Unless he couldn't learn to use it and drowned."

"This is a — revolutionary — hypothesis," said Dr. Tieleke, slowly. "It does have the advantage of explaining why even hypnosis couldn't break past the Goldfish Delusion. On the other hand, you've made a couple of invalid assumptions."

"Like what?"

"First, you assume the existence of souls."

"Of course souls exist. You know that!"

"I believe it," the doctor corrected him.

"No one has ever proven souls. Second, even if you prove that both Michael Sandoval and the fish in question have souls, you have not proved that they are transferable. I've heard of souls separated from the body by death, dead souls possessing or being reborn into live bodies, live souls taking short jaunts and returning — all are backed by shaky evidence and I don't believe in them. There's not even bad evidence for soul transference."

Michael frowned. "So you don't believe me?"

"I'm afraid not."

"But — I remember —"

"Remember being a fish? I —"

The phone rang. Dr. Tieleke looked at it crossly, excused himself, and picked up the receiver. "What is it? Oh? Oh, really? No, no problem. Put them on." He handed the phone across the desk, smiling. "It's for you. One of the places you applied for a job."

MICHAEL RAN TO THE SWIMMING POOL where Angie was giving Earl his therapy. "I got a job!" he crowed. "I'm a draftsman!"

Angie squealed and jumped out of the pool to hug him. Earl scowled. "Stupid Meskin. You're lost now."

"I start Monday. You still want me to move in?" Michael asked Angie. Earl's face changed. Michael ignored him.

"Of course! Have you called Mamacita?"

"And Yolanda and everybody! Yolanda is proud of me! And Mamacita's giving me a party Friday night."

"You want to start moving your stuff today?"

A dark thought crossed Michael's mind. "Maybe. I need to do something this afternoon, but I don't know how long it'll take."

"I'll wait for you after work," she promised, and kissed him.

The pressure of her lips and the curve of her body lingered as he consulted his bus schedule. Just reaching the place would take a big chunk out of the day, and once there — no telling. He took a long time composing the note he stuck in his shirt pocket.

After yesterday's rain, the day was painfully bright — blue sky over green grass, yellow sun reflecting off the white wall around the institute. Michael sat on the bench, watching his familiar, infinitely beautiful surroundings. He reflected that if he didn't carry out his plan, no one would know or blame him.

The bus stopped, and he boarded.

This journey was so familiar that he usually didn't glance up from his book, but today he couldn't look away from the window. Dingy businesses; the fringes of neighborhoods; gas stations converted into restaurants; backyard jungles; ahead, the Tower of the Americas shifting on the horizon.

At Travis Park he got a transfer. He had waited for many buses at this stop, and now found every sight dear — from the round steeple of the Methodist Church to the parking lot, from the Confederate monument to the rusty pigeons. Although he had had lunch, Michael bought a chili cheese dog from the vendor, wondering, as he ate, whether the brain of a goldfish was capable of holding even the memory of color and the taste of cheese.

At the zoo Michael disembarked and crossed the street to the booth where a girl ran the airlift. All hope that his offer would be refused fell away as he looked down into the





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flower-draped pit below him, and the dull limestone pools under all. No matter how tired Michael Sandoval had been when he brought his daughter to the Sunken Gardens five years ago, he must be rested by now. He got off behind the stone pavilion and forced himself to walk into the well of blossoms.

As he descended, he thought of Ruth and Angie, and almost turned around. But — Angie had never allowed him to make her any promises. And how could he justify keeping Ruth's real father and Mamacita's real son away from them?

With an effort, he proceeded to the bridge he had once shared with Angie. It stretched from bed to bed, hovering between nameless flowers. Gripping the parapet, he looked down.

Huge, scaly goldfish swam among the lotuses. Peering down at their massive bodies and flat eyes, Michael felt almost sick with déjà vu. He knew these brainless anti-adventurers. Possibly he was looking into the eyes of his own children and mates. He couldn't tell. All were familiar, because all were the same.

Leaning on the parapet, he tried to send his thought out like ripples on the lotus pond of existence. Soon his head ached. A huge bull carp drifted from the shadows underneath the rock wall of the pit. With lazy waves of his tail he swam alongside the bridge, his eyes turned upward to meet the man's. His gills moved rhythmically, gathering speed.

A wave of nausea and pain in his head almost made the man on the bridge cry out. Instead he gripped the stones of the parapet. Color drained out of the world as wordlessness welled up within him, draining the heat of the sun and the aftertaste of melted cheese. Something inside him screamed "No," and then something outside him screamed "No," too.

If he hadn't had a good grip on the parapet, he would have fallen. Across the clear limestone water streaked a huge bull carp, into the shadows underneath the rock wall. The world was fragrant with March flowers. The man who would always call himself Michael Sandoval took a deep, shuddering breath. "Stupid fish," he thought, gratefully.

Weak with relief, Michael took a turn around the garden. He would learn the names of all these plants. He would draw wonderful pictures. He would bring Ruth here and make sure she understood how precious this business of living like a human being was. He would have more children, with Angie. He would stand in the sun, and be glad.

Pausing on the high trail on the vine-draped side of the pit, Michael looked into the lotus pond. This would make a good watercolor — flowers blooming indiscriminately, water and wisteria pouring down the walls, the Japanese pavilion. Sunday he would come out here, and make preliminary sketches. ♪

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## Contributors

**STORM CONSTANTINE** IS THE AUTHOR of the *Wraeththu* trilogy, published by Tor. She has written eleven novels, the latest of which is *Stalking Tender Prey*, published in the United Kingdom by Penguin Creed. She has also written many short stories that have appeared in magazines and anthologies in the States and the U.K. Storm's influences are ancient mythology, strange phenomena and the convolutions of human relationships. Storm lives in the Midlands of England with two friends and nine cats.

**Carol Heyer** is represented by Worlds of Wonder for her science fiction and fantasy work. Her art is also found at Every Picture Tells a Story, the gallery in Beverly Hills that exclusively sells art from children's books.

**Pat York's** fiction appears in *Full Spectrum V*, *Tomorrow*, and the *Roycroft Review*. She is hanging storm windows in Buffalo, New York.

**Laurie Harden** was raised in Mountain Lakes and now resides in Boonton. After attending Kansas City Art Institute for two years and majoring in painting, she changed majors to illustration and transferred to the Rhode Island School of Design. Laurie graduated with a BFA in 1976. She illustrates and does portraits and oil paintings. Some of her clients include Grosset & Dunlap, Harper & Row, Atheneum Books, ABC, CBS, NJ Bell, Redbook, *Business Week*, *Scholastic*, and the *New York Times*.

**Julie Stevens** is a legal aid attorney in Portland, Oregon. She has published short stories in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Asimov's*, *Whispers*, *Science Fiction Age*, and several horror anthologies edited by Charles Grant. This is her second story for *RoF* set in ancient Hawaii. Her next goal is to persuade the IRS that post-publication, on-location research should be a legitimate deduction.

**Ken Graning** has years of experience as a professional illustrator. Ken's advertising and editorial work has appeared in magazines, trade publications, books, newspapers, posters, brochures, and record album covers.

**Tanith Lee** went to art college and worked in various jobs until DAW Books published *The Birthgrave* in 1975 and she became a full-

time professional writer. She has published more than 160 short stories (and almost 60 books). Her latest English publications are *Vivia* from Little, Brown, and *Reigning Cats and Dogs* from Headline. Also coming from Headline in late spring 1996 is *When the Lights Go Out*. She lives near the sea with her husband, writer John Kaiin, and a cat.

When **Todd Lockwood** was a boy, the only thing he ever wanted to do was draw. Now that he has a wife, three children, and several species of pets, that's all he does—for all kinds of books, magazines, and newspapers. He works in suburban Denver, Colorado.



Pat York



Harlan Ellison

**HARLAN ELLISON** HAS BEEN called "one of the great living American short story writers" by the *Washington Post*; and the *Los Angeles Times* said, "It's long past time for Harlan Ellison to be awarded the title: 20th century Lewis Carroll." Ellison's voice can be heard on the recently released CD-ROM computer game *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*, which uses his cutting edge "ethical scenario." *Edgeworks: The Collected Ellison Vol. 1* is the first of twenty volumes of his work from White Wolf.

**Peni R. Griffin** recently sold his ninth book for young people, *Margo's House*, to Margaret K. McElderry Books, Simon and Schuster. Previous fantasy stories have appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *IASFM*, *Pulphouse*, and smaller magazines. She lives in San Antonio, the setting for "Goldfish," and she's not kidding about the size of the goldfish at the Sunken Gardens in Brackenridge Park.

**Jodi Williams** moved to New York four years ago to pursue a graduate degree in illustration at the School of Visual Art. Currently living and working in New York City, his credits include: *Time Magazine*, *Reebok International*, *The New York Times*, and *American Greeting Cards*.

**Dan Perez** is editing the second issue of a special magazine for Sovereign Media, *Sci-Fi TV Fall Preview*. He has short stories in the anthologies *100 Vicious Little Vampires*, *Xanadu 3*, and *100 Wicked Little Witches*. Dan is a frequent contributor to *Science Fiction Age* and *Sci-Fi Entertainment*. ☛



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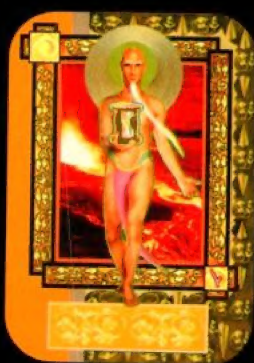
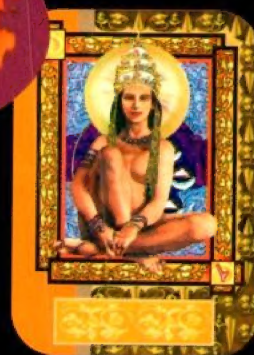
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